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THE STORY OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

CHAYTOR

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RAMESES II

THE STORY OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

From the Call of Abraham to the Death of Nehemiah

BY

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PREFACE

"It ought assuredly to be possible so to teach the historical parts of the Old Testament to those who have reached the age of fifteen or sixteen that, when they enter into manhood, they may have *nothing to unlearn* on the ground of either science or history." Such are the words of Professor Driver in his introduction to the Book of Genesis (*Westminster Commentaries*, p. lxvi; note: the italics are his). This is the ideal, admittedly difficult of attainment, which I have set before myself in writing this book. It is a book intended for use with upper forms only and in conjunction with the Bible. In my opinion, no amount of commentary or explanation can take the place of a sound knowledge of the Biblical text, so far as scripture lessons in school are concerned. Upon this text the scripture teaching in lower forms is usually and rightly based. There are now excellent series of extracts from the Old Testament published, which give the narrative in continuous form, while omitting matter with which junior students are not concerned. In teaching upper forms, the main principles to be kept in view should be, that there is no hard and fast line dividing sacred from profane history, and that the original records both of Biblical and secular history can be subjected to similar methods of criticism. A sixth form which has

heard Thucydides or Livy criticized as historians, or has compared the account given by different historians of Hannibal's invasion of Italy, will naturally ask why the same methods should not be applied to Exodus and Deuteronomy, or to Kings and Chronicles. The religious import of the Bible to elder boys is likely rather to be increased than weakened, if they can be shown that discrepancies between writers do not necessarily impair their reliability as religious historians, and that the great difference between the historical writings of the Hebrews and those of other nations consists in a growing consciousness of God, and of their relation to Him, which is unique in history.

This book is therefore to be used together with the Bible. To secure this end, I have purposely passed briefly over incidents of which the Bible account is intelligible, or have made allusions to them which may not be entirely clear without a reference to the Bible. This system has also saved the necessity of incorporating in my text long extracts from the Biblical narrative, and the space thus gained has permitted a more extended treatment of many points than will be found in the majority of Old Testament histories written for schools. The marginal references without an asterisk *must* be read, if not already known, and may be prepared as home work if necessary. In such a book as this some dogmatism upon a number of disputed points is inevitable; on the whole, those views have been followed which appear to commend themselves to the majority of conservative scholars and critics. I have to thank Mr. H. Cradock-Watson, of Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby, Liverpool, for criticism upon a number of

points. While he has improved the book, I am responsible for any defects in it. Of a large number of books read and consulted, a list of those to which I am most deeply indebted will be found at the end of this volume. For information concerning the illustrations I am indebted to the British Museum catalogues.

H. J. CHAYTOR.

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE,
July, 1911.

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THE STORY OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

PART I

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The reader who takes up a historical work at the present day approaches it with a number of preconceived ideas concerning the nature of authorship, the art of historical writing, and the meaning of history, of which he must in part divest himself when beginning the study of the Old Testament. The invention of printing, the value now placed by authors upon their literary reputation and upon the literary property which they produce lead a modern reader to attach much importance to the author's name upon the title page. The appearance of this name is taken as a guarantee that the book is the writer's own composition, and that while he may derive information elsewhere, he will write in his own words and in a uniform style. This respect for literary property is of comparatively

late growth in the world's history, and was without influence during the ages when the collection of Scriptures was made which we know as the Old Testament. Collections of writings generally similar in character were grouped together under one name: the Psalms are attributed to David, as the patron of poetical literature and the first great national poet; the book of Proverbs is attributed to Solomon, though only portions of the whole collection are claimed as his in the course of the book; Ecclesiastes, a treatise on the vanity of life, is ascribed to Solomon, who is represented as the propounder of it in his own person, though the book is demonstrably of much later date. In the latter case Solomon is chosen as a famous person best fitted by his experience of life to teach the moral lesson which the writer of Ecclesiastes wishes to convey; probably Job is connected with the book which bears his name for a similar reason. Further, additions were made to the books of famous prophets: the second half of Isaiah's prophecy (chapters xl–lxvi) was the production of a writer who lived more than a century later than Isaiah himself.

When, again, we read a modern historical work, we expect to find that events are recorded in chronological order with reference to dates when possible: we expect that the writer will show some acquaintance with records and sources of information earlier than his own time, but that he will use these critically, will sift the evidence which they offer, and present an account of the facts as he understands

them in his own words, making quotations from original documents if he wishes to do so, but clearly marking them as such. The Hebrew historical writers, like many others in early times, do not appreciate the importance of chronology, and do attempt to impress their own individuality upon their writings. They are compilers, putting together the statements of earlier records, often without any acknowledgment of an obligation which was in no way realized, and without attempts at criticism when earlier sources proved discrepant. We have discrepant accounts of the Deluge, of the institution of monarchy under Samuel, of David's rise to prominence under Saul, &c. The researches of scholars have enabled us to gain a general idea of the process by which the Hebrew Scriptures assumed their present form. During the time of the earlier kings, two sets of historical records were current: one of these belonged to the Southern kingdom, and is generally known as J, from the fact that it shows a preference for Jehovah as the form of the Divine name; the other record, current in the Northern kingdom, is known as E, because it prefers the more general name, Elohim. At some time previous to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. these records were amalgamated with additions; the compilation then made included parts of the first six books and the annals of Saul and David's reigns. Under Josiah a religious revival followed the discovery in the temple of the "Book of the Law", and the past history of the nation was reviewed and recompiled according to

the religious standards of the time. The disasters of previous kings, for instance, were now definitely explained as due to their idolatrous tendencies. To the first compilation thus revised was then added much of the book of Deuteronomy, with such prophecies as had been preserved, and perhaps the acts of Elijah and Elisha. After the return from exile the process was repeated for a third time under Ezra; the books of Leviticus and Numbers were extended, and the books of the Chronicles were added to the collection. The reason for rewriting the history of the people, a task which the chronicler undertook, becomes plain when we consider his point of view. He did not regard the existing history as sufficiently edifying; inadequate space was given to matters of ritual, and the moral to be drawn from the failures of past kings was not clearly stated. The chronicler therefore rewrote the history from this point of view, and in estimating his work as history we must make allowance for his special intention. So also we find in Leviticus and Numbers regulations and ritual observances ascribed to Moses which were of later date than the Exodus: these matters are naturally collected under the name of Moses, the chief lawgiver, as the Psalms were collected under the name of David, the chief Psalmist.

While we are thus obliged to bear in mind these deficiencies, as a modern historian might call them, we have to remember that it was not the object of the Hebrew history writers to produce a political history of the Hebrews. Their object was to give

an account of God's dealings with His chosen people, and therefore they pass over many facts and circumstances on which we should be glad of information, though such information might often be of little more than antiquarian interest. In this sense the Old Testament is an inspired book, and in this sense it is the Word of God. We mark throughout it a growing consciousness of God's influence upon the nation, and of His purposes for their future. Naturally we shall find this consciousness stronger in the later than in the earlier books: Isaiah and Jeremiah know more of God than did the writers of Joshua and Judges. In dealing with such questions as that of vengeance upon personal enemies, the widest moral divergences can be found in the Psalms, for the reason that this collection of poetry extends over a long space of time. At the same time Hebrew history is a part of the history of the world: there is a purpose in the history of every nation, though that purpose may not be outwardly apparent. We cannot regard the Hebrews in isolation from the Assyrian, Egyptian, and other nations with whom they came in contact, any more than we can disregard their influence upon the development of modern Europe. Therefore, while we recognize that the content of Hebrew history is primarily religious, we are also bound to examine the political development of the Hebrew nation as far as we can learn the facts of it, because only thus can we realize to what an extent the Hebrews became a religious force in the world's history. Israelite readers may, for instance, have

been content to know the facts that they possessed a body of ritual observances, that the kingdom had been divided, that certain kings were idolatrous, and that others were not. We wish to understand the reasons for these observances, the causes of this idolatry, and to trace the introduction and the growth of such practices, because by this means we gain a clearer comprehension of the way in which God educated His people for His divine purposes.

The political history of Israel is one of defeat and of eventual failure; considered merely as political, it is of less importance than the history of Assyria, of Egypt, or of Greece. But when we see this succession of backslidings and reverses rising to a climax, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ; when we find that the political failure of the nation has ended in success, though success unrecognized by its contemporaries, except a chosen few, we can understand that we have before us an example of purpose in national history, more definitely predestined and elaborated than any other nation can show. We may vaguely understand that the gift of Greece to the world was the greatness of art, or that Rome impressed the world with respect for law; but we can plainly see that the work of Israel was to give the world a religion and to give us personally the assurance of salvation through the Redeemer. In this respect the history which we have to examine is unique, and its uniqueness is best realized by observing how political development proceeded concurrently with religious revelation.

A nation, then, was chosen to receive a divine revelation, and in the fullness of time to become a centre of religious light to the world at large. We shall see hereafter why a nation was chosen rather than an individual or a society. The history of this nation begins, like that of all nations, in tradition. These traditions, as related in the early chapters of Genesis, tell us how the world and its inhabitants were created, how the race of men degenerated, how the world was purified, how different languages and races arose, and were dispersed over the earth. Probably none of these traditions originated among the Hebrews, while some of them are known to have existed in varying forms among many other nations. The story of the Fall was undoubtedly current among the Babylonians in Chaldæa, the cradle of the Hebrew race; the story of the Flood in its essential details has been found in Babylonia, India, Persia, Greece, and even in America. But the Hebrew versions of these traditions differ profoundly from those current among other nations both in the style of their narration and in the effect which they produce. They leave us with certain great fundamental truths of religion which could never be inferred from the legends of non-Hebrew nations, and which are briefly these: that God was the Creator of the world in time, and that man was placed there to live in conscious fellowship with God and therefore in freedom; that man, by his own act, wilfully separated himself from God, subjecting himself and the world to sin; that punishment alone will not

oring man back to the path of duty, and that man is, of himself, unable to help himself. Thus, at the outset, the reader is confronted with the great problem which succeeding ages were to solve, the redemption of humanity.

CHAPTER II

The Patriarchs

The history of the Hebrews begins with the history of a family, which expands to a tribe and eventually becomes a nation. If Moses was the true founder of the Hebrew nation, Abram or Abraham is the founder of the family from which it sprang. The generally accepted identification of Amraphel the King of Shinar, with the great conqueror and legislator, Hammurabi of Babylonia, enables us to find a reason for Abraham's departure from Chaldæa in the unsettled state of the country. About 2350 B.C. the Euphrates district was ravaged by the invasions of the Elamites from the east of the Tigris: Hammurabi drove these invaders back and founded the Chaldæan empire; but shortly before his final success the Elamites had captured Ur, the town which Abraham left, and had massacred all the inhabitants who failed to escape by flight. The aged Terah therefore journeyed from Ur to Harran (Charræ), in North Mesopotamia, accom-

Gen. xi 26 to xii 20.

*Gen. xiv.

panied by his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai, and their nephew Lot. On the death of Terah, Abram received a divine call to leave Mesopotamia for ever, and the First Promise of future greatness was then made to him. From Haran, Abram therefore travelled to the land of Canaan. The name of his steward, Eliezer of Damascus, suggests what in any case is probable, that he followed the old and usual caravan route to Damascus, whence he turned southward to Shechem. There the promise was renewed to him, and he continued his pastoral life, living under the oak or terebinth of Moreh, "teacher", a sacred or oracular tree. Thence he moved to Bethel, until a drought or famine forced him to take refuge in Egypt. Egypt was then under the rule of the "Hyksos", or shepherd kings of Semitic race, and Abram, the wandering shepherd, was naturally welcomed at the Egyptian court. Abram had agreed with Sarai that she should be introduced as his sister: the Pharaoh, or reigning monarch of Egypt, took her as one of his wives, and loaded Abram with presents in accordance with custom. The Pharaoh was troubled with plagues, and the deceit was discovered upon enquiry, but brought down upon Abram no more than a mild remonstrance from the monarch. A similar deception is recorded upon two other occasions; probably we have a threefold tradition of one and the same event. As to the morality of the action, Abram's state-

*Heb. xi 8.

*Gen. xv 2.

*Gen. xx, xxvi.

ment was technically true, as he and his wife were children of the same father, though of different mothers. His object in concealing the truth may have been to avoid arousing desires in the Pharaoh which he could not hope to resist, if he wished to remain in the country. In any case the patriarchs are not moral heroes but types of human character, and Abram's knowledge of God, though real, was not sufficiently developed to imply a full sense of the value of truth for its own sake.

Abram and Lot returned from Egypt to Bethel. The increase of their flocks led to quarrels among their herdsmen concerning rights of pasture, and they resolved to separate, as "the land was not able to bear them". Abram surrendered his right of choice, and Lot chose the Dead Sea district as his future abode. When we meet with him again he is a citizen of Sodom and has apparently abandoned the purely nomadic life. Abram received a third renewal of the promise, removed to Hebron and lived under the oaks or terebinths of Mamre, a friendly Amorite chief. At that time he appears as a warrior, and comes into collision with the Elamites, who claimed suzerainty over Palestine. Chedorlaomer, the King of Elam, and his allies attacked and defeated the kings of the five cities of the plain and captured Lot. Abram gathered an armed force, pursued and defeated the invaders; as captor he could claim the whole of the booty, and the King of Sodom, who wished to save something, proposed a compromise. Abram, however, would accept nothing except the food which

Gen. xiii–xv.

his followers required, and restored the whole to the King of Sodom. On his return he was met by the mysterious figure of Melchisedek, King of Salem, a priest-king to whom Abram paid homage, and apparently a worshipper of the true God. Melchisedek becomes an important figure in the interpretation of the New Testament by the Old, and is chosen as a type of the Messiah. On his return to Hebron Abram again received a divine vision which strengthened his faith in God. He had as yet no son, and began to fear that his inheritance would pass to his steward, Eliezer. The covenant was ratified by sacrifice and a vision by night, when, in "a horror of great darkness", Abram saw the divine light pass between the divided bodies of the victims, in token that God would thus hereafter guide His people through the darkness of the world.

*Ps. cx. Heb. vii 2, 3.

As there seemed no prospect that a son would be born to Abram, Sarai offered him her handmaid, Hagar, in accordance with the marriage customs of the age. Hagar, however, remained Sarai's slave, and jealousy and quarrels were the consequence of the new relationship. Hagar fled to the wilderness, but was bidden to return and was told that her future son, Ishmael, was to be the ancestor of wild and nomadic tribes. Abram then received a renewal of God's promises for the fifth time; his name was in future to be Abraham, while Sarai's name was changed to Sarah, "princess", and the rite of circumcision was instituted. He was visited by

Gen. xvi–xix 29.

three mysterious strangers who came to confirm the promise of a son to him, and rebuked Sarah for the unbelief she displayed when she overheard the terms of the promise. They also informed Abraham of the coming destruction of the cities of the plain, and while two of them went forward to Sodom to warn Lot of the danger, the third remained to hear Abraham's intercession on behalf of the cities, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Here we find stated for the first time the problem of vicarious suffering or punishment which remained a problem to Old Testament writers until the age of Ezekiel. The final concession that Sodom may be saved by the presence of ten righteous men within it, is also a declaration of the fact that Jehovah is a God of mercy as well as of justice. The destruction of the cities followed, with the escape of Lot and the fate of his wife, events which became to the Hebrews a typical example of God's judgment upon sin, and as such are referred to upon several occasions in the New Testament.

Abraham then moved southward from Hebron, and Isaac, the child of promise, was born. Sarah's jealousy ended in the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's household. At this time Abraham was also involved in a dispute with a southern chief, Abimelech, concerning the possession of the wells of Beersheba, an incident repeated in the course of Isaac's life. A treaty was concluded with Abimelech at Beersheba. The crisis of Abraham's

Gen. xxi–xxii 19.

*Gen. xxvi 28–33.

life then came with the command to sacrifice his son Isaac upon a mountain in the land of Moriah, an unidentified region, though tradition regarded it as the future site of the Temple. The custom of human sacrifice was common to many nations of antiquity and to the Canaanitish tribes, and God employed a custom familiar to Abraham as a means for the trial of his faith—a severe trial, because the demand for this sacrifice seemed to contradict the promise already given. In faith, therefore, Abraham prepared to obey the divine command. The surrender of will, the sacrifice of intention, of hopes and plans for the future, was accepted: the actual sacrifice was rejected, and with it the idea that human sacrifice was in any way acceptable to God.

*Heb. xi 19.

Abraham, comforted once more with a sixth renewal of the promise, returned to Beersheba and thence to Hebron, and on Sarah's death purchased for her tomb the cave of Machpelah from the "sons of Heth", members apparently of the Hittite empire, which held sway over the northern part of Palestine and Syria. He then sent his servant to Mesopotamia to seek a wife for Isaac from among his own people. After Rebekah had been brought back and was married to Isaac, Abraham died, and was buried at the side of his wife by his sons Ishmael and Isaac. We may observe that Abraham, while remaining on good terms with the Canaanite inhabitants of Palestine, was careful to avoid any intermarriage with them; the exclusiveness of the chosen people thus

Gen. xxiii–xxv 11.

early becomes manifest. As a character he stands pre-eminent for his faith, his belief in the reality of God's promises to him. He is regarded by Mohammedans as the founder of their religion: the Jews believed that their claim to salvation rested on the fact that they "had Abraham to their father": since the days of Paul he has been recognized as the type of all who are "justified by faith".

Of Isaac we hear but little after his father's death. He lived in the south of Palestine: his conflict with Abimelech upon the question of the wells, and his deceit with regard to Rebekah's relationship to him, are repetitions of events which have been related of Abraham; their appearance here may be due to the preservation of separate traditions in the course of compiling the book of Genesis. The most important fact that we learn of Isaac is that he added agriculture to his flocks and herds as a means of subsistence: the change from nomadic to agricultural life marks the beginning of civilization in the case of every people. Isaac's life was uneventful, but not so were the lives of his twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Their characters are introduced to us by the account of the manner in which Jacob, the supplanter, secured his brother's birthright for himself. The importance attached both here and elsewhere to the father's blessing is characteristic of the early stages of tribal life, in which a man's individual action may affect the whole of his tribe for good or for evil, and is thought to exert a corpo-

Gen. xxv 19-34; xxvi, xxvii.

*Gen. xxvi 12.

rate influence; and in which, again, the formal installation as future chieftain or sheikh was a highly desirable privilege. In this transaction Esau attracts the reader's sympathies far more strongly than Jacob; the deceit practised by him and by Rebekah is utterly discreditable to both, and we may wonder why Jacob was eventually chosen while Esau was rejected. The reason was, that though Esau was superficially the more attractive character with his generosity and readiness to forgive, Jacob showed far greater possibilities for good or for evil. The keynote of Esau's character is struck by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews; Esau was a "profane person"; he had, that is, no reverence for the higher things of life, and was ready to sell his birthright in order to obtain a momentary gratification. He offended his parents by marriage with Canaanitish women, caring nothing for tribal exclusiveness as a principle. He therefore did but lose what he was from the outset unfitted to receive. Jacob's character shows its deeper possibilities during the after experiences by which he was chastened and educated.[1]

*Rom. ix 12, 13.

*Heb. xii 17.

In consequence of Esau's threats, Rebekah persuaded Jacob to leave his home and go to her brother Laban in Padan-Aram. There also he

[1] We may note that the narrative of the birthright involves one of the chronological discrepancies natural to a composite narrative. Isaac is apparently on his deathbed when he gives the blessing; he was sixty years old when his sons were born (xxv. 26); a hundred years old when Esau married his foreign wives (xxvi. 34), after which event the blessing is given: but he lived to the age of a hundred and eighty years (xxxv. 28).

might find a wife from among his own people. Isaac supported this plan, and Jacob travelled northward to Bethel, where Abraham had built an altar; by night Jacob received a vision telling him of his future destiny. In awe he consecrated the stone which he had used as a pillow, and made a solemn vow of service to God. The stone is dedicated to be the house of God; the belief that the deity was specially associated with sacred stones, monoliths, or pillars, which were the symbol of the divine presence, is an old and widespread belief, and the pillars before the porch of Solomon's temple may have been an expression of this idea. We then have the pastoral scene where Jacob meets Rachel at the well, and the long struggle opens between Jacob and Laban. During Jacob's many years of service to Laban, the titular ancestors of the tribes of Israel were born to him together with one daughter. But he felt himself in exile, and at length resolved to return to his home in Palestine. Laban, however, was by no means anxious to let Jacob go; his presence had brought prosperity to the household. An agreement was made for the division of the flocks and herds, apparently to Laban's advantage; but the divine blessing brought a steady increase in the prosperity of Jacob. Laban's sons were irritated by the success which the wandering and homeless shepherd had attained, and at length, in obedience to divine monitions, Jacob resolved to flee while Laban was occupied in shearing.

Gen. xxvii 41–xxix 30; xxx 25–xxxiii.

Laban followed and overtook Jacob in the land

of Gilead, accusing him of the theft of his household gods or teraphim, which Rachel had concealed in the baggage without Jacob's knowledge, and also of stealing his daughters, as though they were captives in war. Jacob argued his side of the question with moderation, appealing to the length and the hard conditions of his years of service, and showing that the prosperity which he had attained was due to the divine favour. Laban is by no means an attractive character; he was selfish, grasping, and ready to deceive Jacob in order to secure his own ends, but he admitted the justice of Jacob's plea; a covenant was made and a stone set up to mark the boundaries of pasture which either party were to respect. Jacob then went on his way; he had successfully avoided an open quarrel with Laban, but he had now to confront the brother from whom he had parted in anger twenty years before. With characteristic diplomacy he sent messengers in front of him to greet Esau and inform him of his return. The messengers reported that Esau was advancing with a strong force of men. Jacob divided his company into two parts, to secure the safety of at least one-half of his possessions, halted at Mahanaim, and sent valuable presents to appease the supposed anger of Esau. He sent his family across the Jabbok, and himself remained for the night upon the further side, where he received the mysterious visitation which marked a turning-point in the development of his character. It was a night when he reviewed his past character, and when the con-

viction came home to him that his faith in God had been chiefly inspired by the hope of gaining some personal advantage. God now revealed himself as an angry God, bringing upon him a deadly adversary in the form of the brother he had wronged. His old misdeeds were rising against him. Jacob none the less wrestles, relying upon his human strength and resources, till he feels that the presence of God is overwhelming. He asks to be treated not as he deserves, but according to the mercies of God: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me". Jacob's name is then changed to Israel: he is no longer to be the supplanter, but the "perseverer with God", the prince who has emerged triumphant from the struggle with men and with God.

The dreaded meeting with Esau proved harmless. Esau's old generosity of character remained unchanged. He greeted his brother with love and emotion, and was reluctant to accept the rich presents which Jacob had sent. Jacob, on the other hand, cautious as ever, was chiefly anxious to close the interview and found specious excuses to decline his brother's offers of help. At length he was able to cross the Jordan and proceed to Shechem, where he bought a piece of land and dug the well which was called by his name even in the time of our Lord. After a quarrel with the Shechemites, Jacob was commanded to move to Bethel, where he had received his first vision when setting out upon his wanderings. There he purified the family worship by removing the

Gen. xxxiii, xxxv.

images and ornaments in the hands of his people; these were buried under the oak tree, and at Bethel the promise made to him by God was renewed. The second mention of the change of name from Jacob to Israel may be regarded as further evidence, if any were needed, of the composite nature of the book. Jacob set up a pillar and poured oil upon it, to sanctify the scene of his visions, and moved southward with his family to Ephrath. Here Rachel, his favourite wife, died in giving birth to a twelfth son, Benjamin. At the same time the death of Isaac in Hebron is recorded. Jacob's wanderings were now at an end for a time, and the interest of the narrative is centred in his son Joseph.

Jacob is the typical Hebrew. Before the vision at the Jabbok, which has been called the moment of his conversion, he is cautious, prudent, calculating and ready, as Arabs are often said to be, to disregard truth when it seemed in conflict with self-interest. The nature of his faith is well seen by contrast with the faith of Abraham. Abraham's faith was unquestioning reliance upon God; Jacob was ready to rely upon God because he thought faith the best means of gaining personal success. The vow made at Bethel, a contractual obligation towards God, marks the spirit of Jacob's religion and is very different from the renunciation of Abraham. For this reason the patriarch's soul was subjected to years of trial, until he had realized the fact that faith is not merely a matter of policy, but a vital principle of life.

*Gen. xxviii 20.

Note on Genesis xxiii. THE HITTITES

Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah from a tribe of Hittites settled about Hebron. The traditional site of the cave is now occupied with a mosque, and the space above the tombs of the patriarchs is strictly guarded by the Moslems, though a few distinguished Christians have been allowed to enter it; among these have been King Edward VII and King George V of Britain. The Hittites are occasionally mentioned throughout the Old Testament, and it will be convenient here to state the main facts known concerning them. The first historical mention of them, outside of the Old Testament, is found in the Babylonian archives, and belongs to about 1800 B.C. The Hittites were then powerful enough to overthrow the last king of the first Babylonian dynasty. They paid tribute to Thothmes III of Egypt about 1500 B.C.; in the fourteenth century one of their kings succeeded in centralizing the scattered Hittite power, and formed a confederacy which was able to overthrow one Tushratta, the King of the Mitanni, a people of some importance in alliance with Egypt. The Hittites then established themselves in the Orontes valley, and here and on the north of Palestine were a constant trouble to the Pharaohs. Rameses II fought a great battle with them, and afterwards concluded a treaty, which is said to be the earliest treaty in existence. It has been conjectured that Sisera, the invader of Palestine in the time of the Judges, about 1500 B.C., was a Hittite. In 1100 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser I of Assyria fought with the Hittites, and Hittite kings are mentioned as contemporary with Solomon and Joram of Israel (1 Kings x. 29; 2 Kings vii. 6). Shalmaneser II and Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria also fought against them, and the destruction of Carchemish by Sargon IV in 717 B.C. seems to have ended a power which internal dissensions had greatly weakened. Whether they were an Aryan or Mongolian people is still a matter of dispute. Dr. Winckler has recently discovered a bilingual text which may facilitate the solution of the long-standing puzzle of the Hittite inscriptions: his reading of the names of their divinities, Mithra, Indra, &c., would confirm the Aryan theory of their origin already advanced by Jensen, unless it can

be shown that the Hittites, whose religion seems to have been a "syncretism", borrowed these divinities from other Aryan neighbours. The speculations which have identified the Hittites with the Ainus of Japan and the Mexican Indians of America are scarce worth mention (See *The Land of the Hittites*, John Garstang, London, 1910.)

From the distribution of the monuments and from historical references we may infer that the Hittites were not a coherent nation, but lived in small city kingdoms. Many traces of them are found in Central Asia Minor, where they were probably the forerunners of the kingdom of Lydia, and whence they pushed eastward. The mention of them in this passage at Hebron, in the south of Canaan, is less surprising in view of their wide distribution; but it is also possible that the term Hittite, for that same reason, came to be used generically as equivalent to "Canaanite". Josh. i 4 and Ezek. xvi 3, 45 seem thus to use the term, while the Assyrian monuments also refer to Palestine and Phœnicia collectively as the "Land of the Hatti". The case of Uriah the Hittite under David is enough to show that the Hittites were not entirely driven out of Palestine by the Israelite conquest

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CHAPTER III

Joseph

The story of Joseph is the story of the transition between the pastoral life of the patriarchal age properly so-called and the period of settlement and bondage in Egypt. The tribe of Jacob then left the Land of Promise, to which they were afterwards to return as conquerors. We can see that their wanderings were divinely ordered; they were removed from Canaan during a period when the land was disturbed by

Gen. xxxvii 3–36; xxxix–xli.

Egyptian invasions and internal struggles which might have ended in their annihilation or absorption by some other race. They were brought in contact with the chief civilization of antiquity, and learned the art of city life based upon agriculture as they could have learned it nowhere else. They passed through the fire of a common tribulation which gave them a sense of nationalism, as their wanderings in the wilderness gave them the fibre and strength to begin national action. If they learned something in Egypt that was afterwards detrimental to their religious life, they also underwent influences and experiences which they could not have afforded to lose. Mesopotamia brought forth Abraham: Egypt was the birthplace of Moses.

Throughout the early part of this story we are struck by the prominence given to dreams, and by Joseph's faith in his God. His closer association with his father Israel may well have given him a deeper consciousness of God than his brothers possessed; they appear rather in the light of flock-masters, with little thought for anything beyond the day's work. Irritated by Joseph's dreams and by his consciousness of his superiority, the brethren conspire to slay him. The amalgamation of two versions of this event is very perceptible: Judah and Reuben are anxious to show some mercy to Joseph; when Joseph was thrown into the pit Reuben proposed to return and set him free, but his intention was anticipated by a company of Midianites, who passed by on their way to Egypt, drew Joseph out of the pit and carried him away.

C 309—(1)

CATTLE MUSTERED FOR STOCKTAKING BY EGYPTIAN HERDSMEN

Above, the herdsmen are kneeling before the scribe and kissing his feet. Below, the cattle are divided into groups of five, of which the scribe is making a list.

The other tradition states that Joseph was sold, upon Judah's proposal, to a band of Ishmaelites, Reuben only returning when the bargain had been concluded, to his great distress. In any case, both brothers supported the story by which the brethren accounted to Jacob for his son's disappearance. While his father lamented, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, an officer in the royal household. Here he obtained his master's favour and rose to a position of trust, only to be cast into the common prison in consequence of the false accusations of Potiphar's wife. His interpretation of the dreams of the chief butler and of the chief baker brought him to the notice of the Pharaoh, who was also disturbed by a dream which his magicians could not interpret. Joseph was himself appointed to carry out the measures necessary to provide against the famine which the Pharaoh's dream portended, and the Hebrew slave became the most important man in the kingdom. He received an Egyptian name, married an Egyptian wife, by whom he had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and so far adopted Egyptian customs that his brethren were unable to recognize him when they afterwards came down to Egypt. When the famine became severe Joseph used the opportunity to increase the wealth and power of his master. The land and cattle of the people and the people themselves became the property of the Pharaoh in exchange for corn. Thus all the land and power, except that of the priests, was in the king's

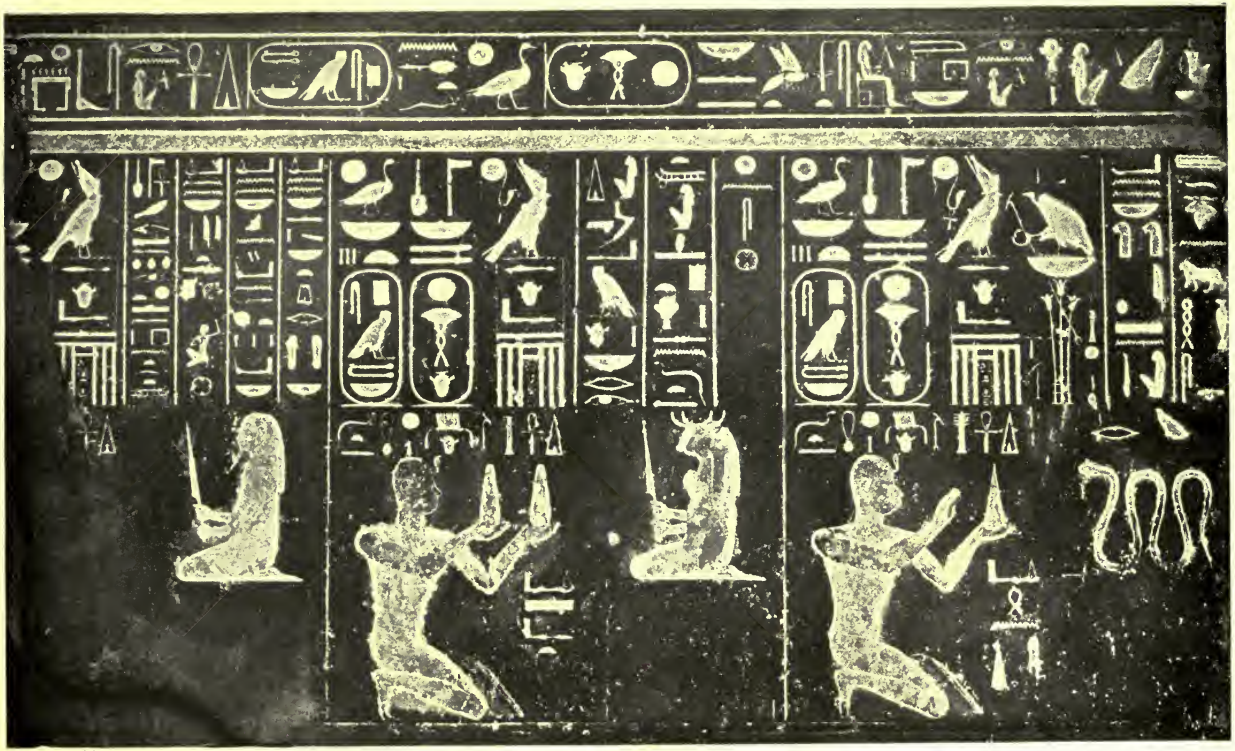
*Gen. xl 15.

Gen. xlvii 13-26.

hands, a state of affairs which is known to have existed under the later Hyksos kings, and will help to explain the royal tyranny depicted in the book of Exodus.

From early ages down to the period of the later Roman empire Egypt was the granary of the Mediterranean world, and when famine came upon the land of Canaan the thoughts of the inhabitants naturally turned to Egypt as a possible source of supply. In earlier years, Isaac had contemplated a similar expedient. Jacob therefore sent his ten sons into Egypt. They failed to recognize Joseph, who saw that Benjamin was not with them, accused them of being spies, and refused them permission to depart unless Benjamin came down to Egypt. Eventually they were allowed to go, leaving Simeon as a hostage. The remorse for their conspiracy against Joseph, which had weighed upon them for years, awoke, and their perplexity was increased by the discovery of their money in their sacks of corn. Joseph's motives were at bottom those of affection; he wished to see his youngest brother and his father. But on the one hand, he was not clear how far the resentment of his brethren still continued, and he may have wished to inflict some small punishment upon them for their previous treatment of himself: on the other hand, his position as viceroy obliged him to be cautious, and not to declare himself until he could do so with safety. He therefore used these devices for keeping in touch with his brethren and for showing them how entirely they are in his power.

Gen. xlii–xlv.



C 309—(2)

KING SETI I, ABOUT 1366 B.C., OFFERING TO THE GOD AMEN-RA, WHO PROMISES TO GIVE HIM "ALL GOOD, BEAUTIFUL, AND PURE THINGS"

Considered merely as a piece of narrative the story of Joseph is one of the finest in the world. If we compare some of the great scenes in the Old Testament narratives, the bringing to David of the news of Absalom's death, Elijah on Mount Carmel, we shall see that the effects are obtained, not by dint of elaborate description but by a few strong and salient strokes: "the heaven was black with clouds and wind and there was a great rain" is a more impressive description of a gathering and bursting storm than pages of detail would furnish. The selection of these few from the many details that might have been chosen, and the placing of them where they will produce the greatest effect in the picture and oblige the reader involuntarily to imagine the rest of the scene, betokens a very high degree of unconscious art, an art fully exerted in the story of Joseph and entirely epic in character. "And Joseph was the governor over the land . . . and his brethren came and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." The princely state of the viceroy, his attendants, his magnificence and the rest are not the less impressive because they are not described in set terms. Epic also in character is the scene of recognition: "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" A lesser writer might have attempted to "break the news" or to preface it by some words of preparation.[1] While the story is epic in style, it is also dramatic in framework: at a definite point

[1] Cp. 1 Sam. iv. 17 and the announcement of Patroclus' death to Achilles, Hom. *Il.* xviii. 5.

in the narrative the positions and feelings of the main actors are suddenly and decisively reversed; this moment occurs at the climax of the action, the touching scene of recognition. The scene crowns the gradual reversal of action which is the theme of the story: the attempt made by his brethren to destroy Joseph becomes the salvation of the house of Jacob. In these respects, as has been pointed out by several commentators, the story satisfies the conditions of drama as laid down by Aristotle. The effect of the climax in these cases depends upon such a due subordination of previous events, and upon such a narration of them in due perspective, as we find here observed. Hence, as a matter of artistic construction, we feel that this climax as given is inevitable and that the story could not have ended in any other way.

Jacob, then, is eventually obliged to send his sons upon a second visit to Egypt accompanied by Benjamin. With his usual caution he gave them advice as to the presents and the money they were to take with them. The brethren, in fear, appealed to the steward of Joseph's household, who brought out Simeon to them and restored their confidence. Joseph entertained them at a banquet, though Egyptian custom forbade him to eat with them, and the next day they began their homeward journey. They were then overtaken by Joseph's steward, who accused them of stealing his master's cup of divination, which was found in Benjamin's sack. They were forced to return with the steward and to appear before Joseph. Judah then made

a pathetic appeal, offering himself as a slave to secure Benjamin's return, at which Joseph could no longer restrain himself, and the recognition took place.

The brethren then returned home, with many presents and an escort, to bring Jacob down into Egypt. The permission of the Pharaoh had been obtained, and as the Egyptians usually maintained a guard at the isthmus of Suez, such permission was necessary. Jacob was ordered by a vision to set out, and was met by Joseph at the Egyptian frontier. The land of Goshen, beyond the Nile delta on the eastern frontier of Egypt, was assigned to the newcomers as a district for their settlement and for the pasture of their flocks. There they might dwell apart, for shepherds were "an abomination to the Egyptians". Jacob and five of his sons were brought by Joseph to an interview with the Pharaoh. Seventeen years later Jacob felt that his death was near, and made Joseph swear a solemn oath that he would carry his body back to the family tomb in the cave of Machpelah. Jacob then blessed Joseph's two sons, laying his right hand purposely upon the head of Ephraim the younger, as he foresaw his future greatness. The forty-ninth chapter of the book is occupied with his blessing upon the titular heads of the twelve tribes, which is couched in the form of a forecast of their destinies. Jacob's death illustrates the limited nature of the religious conceptions of the patriarchal age. He wished to be buried in the land of his fathers; he hoped

Gen. xlv 16–xlvi 7; xlvi 28–xlix.

that his posterity would become a great nation. Of personal immortality he has no conception. It was an age when the individual was of little account compared with the tribe of which he was a member, and his hopes of a life after death were confined to a wish to live in the persons of his descendants.

After his death Jacob was embalmed by the Egyptians, who have ever been famous for their skill in this art, which their religion imposed upon them. The body was then carried to Canaan and buried with full ceremony in the cave of Machpelah. Jacob's sons then began to fear that Joseph might punish them for their old injury to himself, but Joseph reassured them, expressing his belief that their wrongdoing was divinely intended to end in the general welfare. On his death he exacted a promise that his body should be carried back to Canaan when the return to Palestine took place.

Gen. 1.

The only point in the story inconsistent with Joseph's character is his omission to relieve his father's anxiety by sending word to him of his welfare, after he had risen to power in Egypt. Conjecture upon the solution of this old difficulty is purely speculative. Otherwise Joseph is a singularly noble character: patient under misfortune, proof against temptation, generous and forgiving in the hour of his triumph, and preserving a warm family affection. He is sustained in adversity and guided in prosperity by a firm consciousness that "God was with him".

Additional Note. EGYPT IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The Pharaoh of the oppression before the exodus is generally supposed to be Rameses II of the nineteenth dynasty, 1292–1225 B.C. (approximately). If this be so, the Pharaoh of Joseph's time was one of the later Hyksos kings. These were the leaders of a race of Asiatic nomads who remained paramount in Egypt for some five hundred years, and as "shepherd" kings may have felt some special interest in the Hebrew immigrants, while respecting native prejudice (xlvi. 34). The "local colour" in Joseph's story is strongly marked. The "magicians and wise men" (xli. 8) correspond to the two classes of scribes and seers at Egyptian courts. Joseph shaved himself (xli. 14), for only foreigners wore beards. The gold chain (xli. 42) was a specially Egyptian mark of distinction. Joseph's eating apart (xliii. 33) and his possession of a divining cup (xliv. 5) are also Egyptian customs.

CHAPTER IV

Moses and the Exodus

Between the time of Joseph's death and the age which the book of Exodus depicts a considerable period of time must have intervened. The free pastoral tribe has become a nation of slaves. A Pharaoh was on the throne who "knew not Joseph" and oppressed the Israelites with forced labour. While the biblical records are silent concerning the interval between Genesis and Exodus, we can gain some indications from outside sources. The name Israel has so far been discovered only once among the Egyptian records, and some Egyptologists do not accept the reading: it occurs

among a list of nations subject to Pharaoh Merenptah. He probably came to the throne about the end of the fourteenth century B.C., and we are informed that he was deeply grieved by the death of his eldest son whom he had admitted to some degree of coregency. Merenptah, also known as Merienptah II or Amenephthes, succeeded Rameses II, the famous Sesostris, who was the builder of the stone cities Raamses and Pithom, and the oppressor of the Exodus. The events of Egyptian history between his time and that of the Hyksos kings are known to us from Egyptian records and from the Tell-el-Amarna letters, which contain correspondence from the Egyptian governors of Palestine to the Pharaohs, to whom they were responsible.

The Hyksos kings were Semites, and had been ready to protect and favour the Israelites, who were of the same race and of the same profession as these shepherd kings had been. A revolt of the Hamitic princes had driven out the usurpers and completely changed the situation. A succession of powerful rulers had raised Egypt to the height of her power and extended her empire at one period to the Euphrates. The Amorites and the Hittites upon the north were, however, a constant menace, as the Tell-el-Amarna letters show. When the Egyptian conquests in the north were lost the Hittites began seriously to threaten the Egyptian frontier. Rameses was unable to subdue them in a twenty years' struggle, within which the great battle of Kadesh occurred, and formed an alliance with them. His hold upon his foreign

C 309—(4)

CONQUEST OF THE LIBYANS AND SYRIANS BY RAMESES II

From casts in the British Museum made from the walls of the Temple of Thelemset (or Talmis)

1. Table of offerings. 2. Asiatic prisoners before Rameses. The king's favourite lion lies at his feet. 3. Rameses slaying a Libyan prisoner, who is also attacked by the king's dog. 4. Syrian war: Rameses charging the warriors of a Syrian or Canaanite tribe; above him is the hawk god of war. 5. Capture of a Syrian fortress by Rameses. 6. Prisoners before Rameses.

possessions was not secure, and the presence of the Israelites upon the frontier seemed a source of danger. Israel was therefore reduced to the position of a slave horde, with the definite object of checking the increase of their numbers; and when these measures proved ineffectual, the massacre of Hebrew male children was begun. Under the rule of Rameses II the native Egyptians often seem to have been little better treated than the Israelites, and the whole country groaned under the royal mania for building.

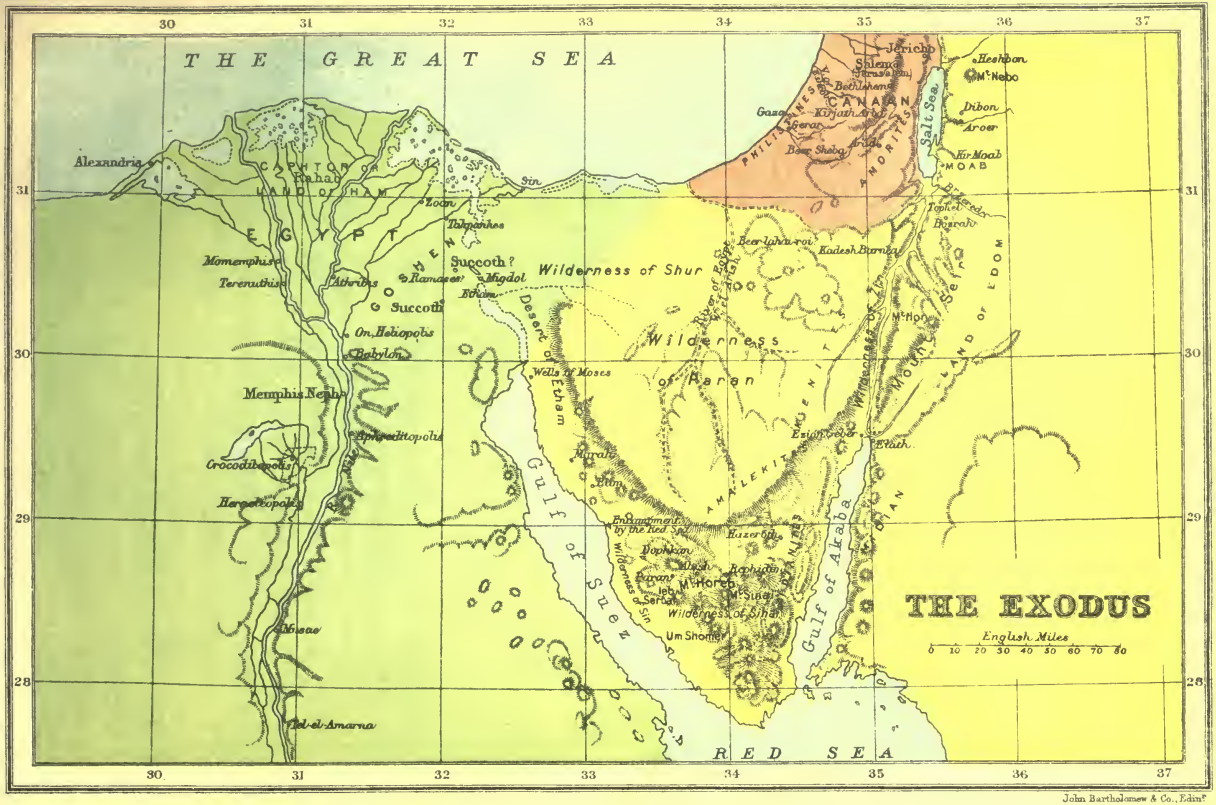
It was therefore imperatively necessary that Israel should depart. The sense of national pride was being crushed out of the Israelites by the degrading influence of slavery. The "flesh pots of Egypt", the fertility of the country, and the ease with which food could be obtained exerted a no less demoralizing influence. The true nature of God was being forgotten, while the people were learning the popular religion of the Egyptian lower classes. If the Hebrews were not to be absorbed by the Egyptian nationality, revolt and migration were the only means of escape remaining to them. The Exodus therefore took place, as far as we can see, exactly at the proper time. If Israel left no mark upon Egypt, Egyptian influence upon Israel was very transitory. The arts and crafts of the Egyptians were forgotten during the wanderings in the wilderness, and these ornaments of civilization were relearned from Phœnicia when they were required at a later date. The calf worship with which we meet at the foot of

Mount Sinai had been learned in Egypt, but later Hebrew idolatry was derived from other sources. The nation was strong in numbers and its manhood was not entirely crushed out of it. The history of its deliverance is the personal history of Moses.

Moses was the son of Amram, a Levite, and of his wife Jochebed; his brother and sister Aaron and Miriam are also important figures in the history of the Exodus. His mother hid him as long as she could, lest he should be put to death under the royal decree: after three months, further concealment seemed impossible; then, like Romulus and Remus or Sargon I of Assyria, Moses was set adrift upon the Nile, and saved by the Pharaoh's daughter. He was brought up in the Egyptian court and became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians". But this period of his life is not related in detail by the Bible narrative, and no reliance can be placed upon the traditions which speak of him as a priest of Osiris or an ambassador to Ethiopia. The important point is that while he profited by Egyptian culture, he retained a full sense of his own nationality, and it was his fierce intervention to save one of his compatriots that forced him to flee from the Pharaoh's court. He took refuge in the land of Midian, where he became the guest of Reuel the priest (also known as Hobab and Jethro), after defending his daughters from the insolence of the shepherds round a well, when they were attempting

Ex. ii–iv.
*Num. xxvi 59.
*Heb. xi 23.

*Acts vii 22.



John Bartholomew & Co., Edinr.

to water their flocks. Moses married one of the daughters, Zipporah, who bore him a son, Gershom.

Moses already possessed patriotism and culture; the solitude of the desert was needed to strengthen his character and to prepare him by meditation and privation for the great commission which was to be his. Elijah and John the Baptist also came forth from the wilderness purified and strengthened in like manner. Then came the great event which marked the refounding of the Hebrew religion, the revelation of God in the burning bush and His attributes as connoted by the divine name, Jehovah. With this name several questions are connected to which some answer must be found, if we are to gain a true idea of the Hebrew religion in the following centuries. In the first place the name Jehovah was given, because the Hebrews would have been unable to reverence and worship a nameless God. The desire of Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, was to know the divine name. Jehovah was to the Hebrews at the outset nothing more than a national God. As the Moabites had their Chemosh, the Phœnicians their Baal, and the Ammonites their Milcom, so the Hebrews had their Jehovah; and while they worshipped Him as one and supreme for themselves, they regarded other national gods as existing independently of Jehovah, though inferior to Him in power. Not until a much later age did they claim supremacy for Jehovah over the whole earth and definitely acknowledge the gods of other

*Mark xii 26. Luke xx 37.

*Gen. xxxii 29.

*Judg. xi 24.

nations to be no gods. Before this great event took place the Hebrew name for God was Elohim, a word plural in form, but not necessarily implying the existence of more gods than one: the meaning of the name Jehovah is uncertain, and the Revised Version of the Bible gives several marginal renderings; the reason for this uncertainty is that Hebrew was originally written only in consonants, the vowel points which are placed under the letters being added at a much later date. The traditional reverence for the name of Jehovah or JHVH induced the use of substitutes for it, such as Adonai or Lord, lest the holy name should be profaned. Thus the true pronunciation of the name was uncertain when vowels were added after the system of vowel points came into use. Modern scholars are generally agreed that Yahwe or Jahveh represents the original form of the name: as long as the facts of the case are known there is no objection to the use of the form Jehovah, which English tradition has consecrated by long use; the exact etymological significance of the name, which is uncertain, is less important than the ideas which it connoted, and the use of it as the title of the living God is perfectly clear.

*Mat. xxii 32.

The insistence on the importance of this name by Hebrew thought is somewhat difficult for modern minds to appreciate, and can be made clearer by a few examples. Jehovah, for instance, "sets his name" in a place, or "causes His name to dwell there", phrases which

*Deut. xiv 24.
1 Kings ix 3.

mean that He gives a special display of His power or reveals His presence. The angel going before Israel on the march through the desert is the personification of the *name* of Jehovah. The Psalmist appeals to Jehovah for safety through His name; through His name he will defeat his enemies. David comes out against Goliath "in the name of Jehovah", in other words, the support and power of Jehovah was on his side. The same tendency of thought is found in the New Testament. In short, Jehovah's name is Himself: it summed up His power and glory, and was therefore in thought convertible with these attributes. Hence it had a greater importance to the Hebrews than we usually attach to names or titles as such.

*Ex. xxiii 21.

*Ps. liv 1. Ps. xliv 5.

*Acts v 28.

Moses, then, having received the revelation of God's being, is ordered to appear before the Pharaoh and to demand the release of the people. He displayed much hesitation, but was given certain signs by which the people might be induced to believe his authority. He then pleads his slowness of speech, and is told that Aaron shall go with him: "he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God", an exact description of the position of a prophet or mouthpiece with reference to Jehovah. Moses then left his father-in-law, appeared before the people with Aaron and showed the signs that were to attest his authority.

The Pharaoh declined to grant the request of

Moses and Aaron. The idea that he was unwill-
Ex. v–vi 13; ing to part with so large a source of un-
vi 28–xii. paid labour is hardly consistent with the policy of extermination which his predecessor had pursued. Merenptah, however, was a weak ruler, with the obstinacy of weakness. He ordered the labour of the Israelites to be increased by depriving them of the previous allowance of straw for brick-making,[1] and the people reproached Moses and Aaron for the fact that their intervention had merely led to the doubling of the burden. Moses and Aaron again appeared before the Pharaoh, but he refused to listen, and a succession of plagues followed as the consequence of his refusal.

The behaviour of the Pharaoh, as it is described to us, requires some explanation. His motives are
*Ex. vii 13. explained by three phrases: "The
Ex. viii 15, 19. Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh"; "Pharaoh hardened his heart", and "Pharaoh's heart was hardened". These phrases express the same process seen from different points of view, which we should probably call refusal to listen to the monitions of conscience. The spectacle of moral blindness by which a man rushes to his own destruction with ever-accelerated speed, further sin following the result of previous sin, is so extraordinary that it is constantly represented as due

[1] Straw is not essential for brickmaking and indeed adds to the labour involved, as it must be mixed with the clay. It was, however, used, finely chopped, to dry the hands of the worker and the moulds to prevent the adherence of the clay, and to dust the finished bricks for the same reason before they were stacked up to dry. Hence without straw the work would proceed more slowly. See *Egypt and Israel*, Flinders Petrie; London, 1911, p. 33.

C 309—(5)

HEAD OF MERENPTAH

to a moral darkening inflicted by God. (See Appendix to Chapter II, Part II.) There is, however, a further point to consider, the fact that God is said to have raised up the Pharaoh for the purpose of showing His own divine power by making the Pharaoh the subject of it. This being so, how far can the Pharaoh be considered as responsible for his hardness of heart? The difficulty is simply the old-time problem of reconciling the fact of the divine foreknowledge with the free will of man, a discussion of which would be out of place here. Enough that the Pharaoh was free to yield or to refuse at any stage of the narrative.

*Ex. ix 16.

*Rom. viii 17.

The fact has often been noted that the first nine plagues were events that might have occurred at any time in Egypt: the Nile is discoloured at the time of its rising; the insect and reptile plagues, the sandstorms that darken the day, the diseases of animals and men were visitations not unknown in Egypt. It is also to be noticed that one plague was the cause of others: the discolouring of the Nile multiplied the frogs, and the decaying bodies of the frogs produced flies and the germs of disease. But that the plagues have a special character in this case is plain from their intensity and their invariable occurrence upon the Pharaoh's rejection of Moses' demands. Further, they rise to a climax—inconvenience, injury to property and to health, and loss of life. Lastly, they affect the religious habits of the Egyptians; their cleanly persons and houses are contaminated with vermin

and boils; the sacred cattle perish, the holy Nile becomes as blood. Hence the significance of these visitations must have been startling to the Egyptians, although the Pharaoh may have been induced to deny their significance by the fact that such occurrences were to be expected at particular seasons of the year. The series is closed by the destruction of the first-born and the institution of the Passover and of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the annual festival which has ever reminded the Jews of their deliverance from bondage, and is to Christians the point of transition from the old dispensation to the new. The killing of the passover lamb becomes typical of the sacrifice of Christ, who delivered His followers from their servitude to sin, as Israel was delivered from the house of bondage. We shall meet hereafter with the mention of the typical, and it may be well to state that a chance analogy or resemblance between situations or personages in the Old and New Testaments respectively does not necessarily imply a typical resemblance. The new dispensation is the necessary and inevitable outcome of the old. *Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet: Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet.* Hence the Old Testament will show indications of that climax to which it was to lead: such indications are spoken of as types, as dim and earthly copies of a heavenly original or archetype which will be realized on earth by the kingdom of God, an idea elaborated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The misguided zeal of commentators has often exalted fanciful re-

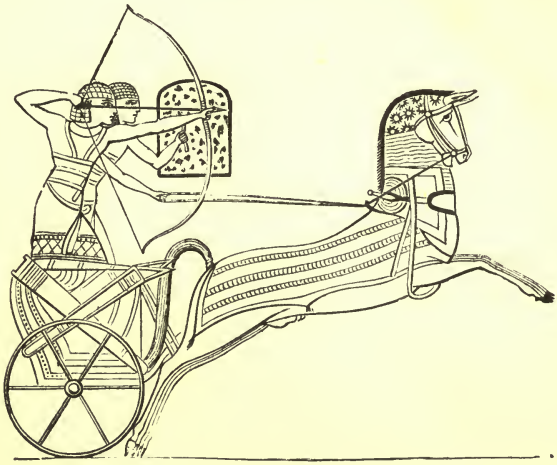
C 309—16)

SUN-DRIED CLAY BRICKS, STAMPED
WITH CARTOUCHE

semblances to the dignity of types; but the type presupposes a purpose in history, the shadow cast before by a coming event.

Amid a cry of horror and despair from Egypt the Israelites began their flight. It is impossible to speak with any certainty either of their numbers, or of the route which they followed. The western shore of the Red Sea,

Ex. xii 37–xv



Egyptian War-chariot

which they eventually reached, has been so considerably altered that no definite point can be recognized as the place of passage. The Pharaoh had repented of his decision, and his army was now pursuing the fugitives. The composite narrative gives two accounts of the means of crossing. In one, and the more probable, a strong east wind, aided by the tide, drove back the water from the

lagoons and left a passage for the Hebrews. The other account represents the rod of Moses as cleaving the waters, which stood up in walls on either side until the Hebrews had passed over. Then the wind dropped, and the reflux of the tide overwhelmed the pursuing Egyptians. The triumph song of Moses commemorated the deliverance, and the lxxviiith and cvth Psalms are evidence of the extent to which the nation was impressed by its great deliverance.

The shortest and easiest road to Palestine could have been traversed by the Israelites in two months at most. But Moses was forbidden to make a direct advance upon the promised land. It was first necessary to make a nation out of the undisciplined horde, which would have been totally incompetent to attack the tribes of Canaan with the smallest hope of success. The discipline of the years of wandering in the desert was the hard and necessary discipline of drill. The seeds of effeminacy derived from Egyptian influence were extirpated, and the foundation was laid of the religious ideas upon which the social polity of Israel was afterwards based. This process is said to have occupied forty years. Isolated scenes of desert life are presented to us, but of the route which the wandering followed we know practically nothing. The place-names given to us were often only the memorials of incidents that occurred to the migrating host, and are of no geographical value. One fact is certain: the Sinaitic peninsula between the arms of the Red Sea was an Egyptian possession;

valuable for its mineral wealth, it was occupied by Egyptian miners and garrisons, and was therefore a district which the Israelites would be careful to avoid. The deserts of Edom and Midian would have provided the refuge which the fugitives required, and probably the greater part of the time of wandering was spent in those districts.

The hardships of desert life evoked loud murmurings from the people, and the mention of these is strong evidence for the historical truth of the narrative. An imaginary account would have drawn a much more harmonious picture of the wanderings. Moses was divinely instructed in the means of sweetening the bitter waters. In the wilderness of Sin the cry for food was answered by the sending of the manna and the quails. The manna is still recognized by the Arabs as a source of food supply; it is a gum which falls at night from the tamarisk trees, and may be gathered in the early morning before the heat of the sun has melted it. Definite rules were laid down for the collection and the use of it. A pot of manna was afterwards guarded in the ark and this means of sustenance became a national emblem upon Jewish coins. At Rephidim a double trial awaited the host. A scarcity of water provoked fresh murmurings against Moses and Aaron until a stroke of the leader's rod brought forth water from the rock of Horeb. The wandering tribes of the Amalekites then attacked the people and were defeated by a chosen band of warriors under Joshua, whose success was continuous so long as

Ex. xv 22–xix.

*Ps. cv 39.

Moses held up his hands. In this task he was helped by Aaron and Hur, who is said to have been the husband of Miriam.

Moses' relations by marriage proved of much assistance to the wanderers at this time. His father-in-law, Jethro, visited him, bringing his wife Zipporah and his children. The sacrifice to Jehovah, and the feast in which Jethro took part, indicate the conclusion of an alliance between Israel and Midian of considerable value to the Israelites at a time when they were not in a condition to withstand continual attacks from Bedouin tribes. Jethro found Moses bearing the whole burden of deciding disputes between the people, and advised him to appoint inferior judges to settle small disputes and confine himself to the decision of important matters. Moses adopted this plan: as he was Jehovah's interpreter to the people, judicial decisions obtained the force of law and a body of law was gradually built up.

Then, however, came the great moment in Hebrew history, when the people received the law from Jehovah on Mount Sinai. As has been said, this mountain can hardly have been situated in the Sinaitic peninsula, and is more probably to be sought in the range of Mount Seir. The locality, however, is of little importance compared with the fact. Amid thunder, lightning, and the voice of the trumpet, standing without the inviolable barrier, the people saw Moses pass into the cloud, and received from him the assurance that they were henceforward to be a theocracy, a peculiar

people entrusted with the oracles of God Himself.

Additional note to Ex. xii 37–41

1. *The route.*—Raamses or Rameses, from which the Israelites started, cannot have been very remote from Pithom, the store city which the Israelites built, and which has been discovered by M. Naville. They moved to Succoth, which has been identified with the Egyptian Thuku, a fortress and settlement near Pithom. The object of this move was therefore to enable the Israelite workers at Pithom to join those from Rameses. They then advanced to "Etham in the edge of the wilderness". This brought them to the isthmus of Suez, guarded by a wall in ancient times. They then turned to Pi-hahiroth, in a southerly direction. In the line of the present Suez Canal were two lakes, and between the southernmost of these and the north point of the Gulf of Suez is now a space of land. It is probable that in earlier times the Gulf of Suez was united with these lakes and that what is now dry land was then sea. This is thought by many authorities to have been the crossing point, and as it is now the highest ground, it must have been the shallowest part of the gulf at the time of the Exodus. The term "east" wind is frequently used to denote the Sirocco, which was properly a hot and violent south-east wind. This would drive the waters northward from the shallows and dry the ground. The miraculous nature of the occurrence consisted in the fact that this wind set in precisely at the moment when it was required. After the fugitives emerged into the desert, the route cannot be identified with any certainty.

2. *The numbers.*—The 600,000 as given is a number impossibly large. The land of Goshen could not have supported such a multitude—moreover, only 40,000 entered Canaan to attack Jericho. Prof. Petrie's ingenious explanation that the Hebrew term for "thousand" here bears its other meaning of "tent" or "household", disregards the fact that this passage, and others, such as Numbers i 3, 18, speak only of men and make separate mention of children. The fact is that in early manuscripts in all languages numerical statements are constantly subject to corruption, and Hebrew is no exception to the rule.

Hence many discrepancies: in David's census, for instance, Judah is given as numbering 470,000 men; but under Rehoboam only 180,000, a decline most improbable during the prosperous reign of Solomon.

3. *The date.*—Rameses II, who is assumed on the highest probability to be the Pharaoh of the oppression, reigned from about 1292–1225 B.C. His successor, Merenptah, reigned from 1225–1213 B.C. From 1194 B.C. onwards there is a gap of some two-and-a-half centuries in the history of Egyptian invasions and control of Palestine. Hence the entry into Palestine is likely to have occurred subsequently to 1194 B.C. The Exodus probably took place rather towards the end of Merenptah's reign, when his authority became weak, than at the beginning of it, and is given, accordingly, by Petrie as occurring about 1220 B.C., the end of the wanderings being in 1180 B.C. Various attempts to harmonize these dates with the Biblical record and to explain discrepancies have been made, but the subject is too complicated for discussion here. It should be noted, however, that the death of Solomon may be fixed with tolerable certainty as occurring in 937 B.C. Hence the death of Saul, if the traditional numbers are followed, took place in 1017 B.C. Therefore the period between 1180 and 1017 B.C., some hundred and sixty-three years, is occupied with the periods of Joshua, Judges, and Saul's reign. Of this hundred and sixty-three years, Joshua's conquest is said to have occupied some thirty; while the reign of Saul, though doubtless shorter than the traditional forty years, must have occupied some fifteen years. The result is that the period of the Judges, allowing for all uncertainty in such calculations as these, was shorter than is generally supposed.

Additional note to Ex. xv. Hebrew Poetry

The distinction between poetry and prose in the Bible is not always clear in the absence of what we are accustomed to regard as definite metrical form. As regards form, prose ends and poetry begins when the ear can anticipate the recurrence of an accent or beat as likely to occur with some regularity. Rhyme and strict metre are unknown to Hebrew poetry, but rhythm and alliteration are found. These are conjoined with

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MUMMY OF RAMESES II

the most characteristic feature of Hebrew poetry, which is known as Parallelism; a line is divided into parts, so that these correspond in sense and to some extent in form. This correspondence is gained by the repetition of an idea, and is the result of a tendency natural to oratory which was probably stimulated among the Hebrews by the custom of antiphonal singing or recitation. As an example, take the first verse of Psalm i:

> "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
> Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
> Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful".

The general idea is "avoidance of the wicked": this is repeated in three different ways, which in this case rise to a climax—to act as the ungodly do, to associate with them, to live with them. It is thus a case of "rising" parallelism; many other varieties are distinguished. The simplest form is "synonymous" parallelism, which merely repeats the idea in different words:

> "The depths have covered them,
> They sank to the bottom as a stone".

"Antithetic" parallelism, in which the second half expresses the same truth as the first by contrast, is especially common in proverbial literature:

> "The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion,
> But his favour is as dew upon the grass".

The Hebrews themselves were fully aware of the difference between their prose and poetry, as the special terms for "song", the existence of "alphabetical" psalms, and perhaps the musical directions given as headings to the Psalms will show

CHAPTER V

The Law

The four legal books, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, form that part of the Old Testament which is concerned with legal and constitutional questions. It is obvious at the first glance that they contain many regulations which must have been unknown at the time of Moses: a magnificent Tabernacle, a complicated system of sacrifices, and a sumptuous altar are not the kind of institutions which we should expect to find imposed upon a band of wanderers who were struggling to gain the bare means of subsistence. The fact is that laws grow by degrees and throughout a nation's history: the laws of the Jews, from the earliest to the latest times, have been collected in those four books and attributed to Moses, the supreme and typical legislator, just as the whole body of the Psalms were attributed to David, the greatest national poet. We have therefore to discover what precepts Moses was inspired by Jehovah to deliver to the people at this period of their history. On this subject considerable diversity of opinion has prevailed: but it may be said that of the hundred and nineteen chapters from Exodus xix to the end of Deuteronomy, some twenty-five are regarded by scholars as belonging to the early tradition known as JE (see p. 3). The remainder belong to the later periods when the law was re-

codified, in the time of Josiah and after the Exile, probably under Ezra.

Nor, again, are we to suppose that the Israelites arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai without any knowledge whatever of law or its meaning. Customs which gain the force of law naturally grow up among any body of people who are brought into constant association with one another. Some of the early Israelite laws are to be found in the Babylonian code of Hammurabi, which was framed about 2250 B.C. The laws dealing with retaliation and the protection of property may well have been in force elsewhere in very similar form. To speak of Moses as having "borrowed" from the Babylonian code would be a very unwarrantable statement. The differences between the two are considerable. Hammurabi's code, for instance, makes no mention of the Sabbath, of courts of law, of laws against magic, corruption, or false weights. We do not find in it the merciful regulations of Moses, kindness to foreigners and to animals, cities of refuge, and the like. In any case, the point is not that Moses gave an entirely new code to his people, which would have been an unstatesmanlike proceeding, but that he codified and extended existing institutions, and, still more important, gave them to the people as the command of Jehovah. Law henceforward was not merely a matter for contract between man and man or a matter of personal convenience. Obedience to law was obedience to God, and this to the bulk of the people was a new idea.

In the first and foremost place were given the ten commandments, which, in their simple and primitive form, ran probably as follows:

Ex. xx 1-17.

1. I am Jehovah, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have none other god beside me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah in vain.
4. Remember the day of rest to keep it holy.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

The amplifications attached to some of these words, with which we are familiar from our Prayer Book and Church Catechism, vary in the several versions of the Decalogue to be found in the Pentateuch, and are probably explanations added at a later date.

While these commandments express rules of morality universally binding upon all men, the law was to the Israelites a purely national law, as Jehovah was a purely national God. The idea of Jehovah as supreme over the whole world is of much later date. Thus the commandments proceed in full logical order: they deal first with man's duty to the national God, who is to be honoured in worship, work, and rest, for by Him the nation exists; they next deal with the family, upon which the nation is based; with the neighbour, whose rights cannot be violated

without detriment to the national welfare; and with the community, to which its members owe a duty. The nation, its existence and its welfare, is thus the object of the law's solicitude. The promulgation of the law was followed by a solemn covenant between God and His people; this was not, as later ages misinterpreted it, a mere contractual obligation. God did not promise prosperity in return for obedience. He had chosen the people for Himself, and they were therefore to be holy because He was holy, because He was their God, and not in the hope of benefits to be obtained by the practice of holiness.

Ex. xix 4-6; xxiv 4-8.

Moses also gave the people a number of regulations which probably in many cases codified and sanctioned pre-existing usages. These laws are such as would be essential and natural to a primitive pastoral people, and may be classified as regulating (1) the treatment of inferiors, slaves, foreigners and animals; (2) property rights and the penal code for violation of them; (3) cases of bodily or personal injury, and the redress obtainable.

*Ex. xxi-xxiii.

As to these points, we may notice that a Hebrew slave was to be emancipated after seven years' slavery. A master who killed his slave was to be punished; and if he maimed a slave, the slave might go free. The sojourner or foreigner had no legal rights, but he was not to be oppressed. Usury might be exacted from foreigners but not from Hebrews by Hebrews. A man must restore even to his enemy a strayed ox or ass, and help

his enemy to raise these animals if they had fallen. An animal that caused the death of a man was to be killed. A man might defend his property by killing a thief at night, though this was a criminal offence by day. Theft must be atoned for by full restitution of the property plus one-fifth and an offering. A man who killed another by accident might take refuge or asylum at an altar, and afterwards in special cities of refuge; the deliberate murderer had no right of this kind, but was to be handed over to the avenger. Injuries to the person were punished by the law of retaliation, an eye for an eye. Sorceresses were to be put to death, and magical practices in general were forbidden. These laws were afterwards amplified, often in a more humanitarian spirit, as may be seen in the book of Deuteronomy.

A public religion implies a ritual or form of worship for its maintenance, especially among a primitive people, where imagination and sentiment is most easily impressed through the eye. The ritual of the Mosaic age was entirely simple, as far as we can tell, and intended to avoid all formalism, while continually reminding the people of their dependence upon Jehovah. The altar was to be made of earth or unhewn stone, whenever an altar was required: there was no question of any fixed centre for sacrifice. The sanctuary was the Tent of Meeting or the Tabernacle, an open tent pitched outside the camp under the charge of Joshua. There it was that Moses entered into communion with Jehovah, and

*Ex. xx 24–26.

before it he expounded the divine will to the people. Lastly, there was the Ark of the Covenant. The commandments forbade man to materialize God in graven images, but they were not left without a witness of His will and of His covenant. This witness was before them in the tables of stone which the Ark contained. The great national festival was, of course, the Passover, on the 14th of Abib or Nisan (April). The Feasts of Weeks and of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement belong to later periods of Jewish history. It will, however, be convenient to enter into these matters a little more fully.

The three great feasts correspond roughly with those which we know as Easter, Whitsuntide, and Harvest Thanksgiving. The main features of the Passover celebration, as described in the book of Exodus, were retained until New Testament times. On the evening of the 13th of Abib the houses were searched to remove all leaven; on the 14th the Passover lambs were slain at the Temple, while the Levites chanted Psalms cxiii–cxviii. The lambs were then taken home by the people, roasted, and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened cakes. Each guest brought four cups of red wine to the feast. Over the first cup a blessing was said: then came the washing of hands and the offering of prayer. With the second cup the son of the house asked his father the significance of the feast, and Psalms cxiii and cxiv were sung. Grace was said over the third cup, and after the fourth Psalms cxv–cxviii were sung. This is

*Ex. xii 1–13.

the feast which for Christians forms the link between the Old Dispensation and the New, when Jesus, at the celebration of the Last Passover, gave a new meaning to the ritual acts of the pouring of wine and the breaking of bread. Conjoined with the Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at which time the offering of a barley sheaf opened the reaping season. This was followed, after fifty days, by the Feast of Weeks, also known as the Feast of Harvest and the Day of the First Fruits, which marked the conclusion of the wheat harvest: two leavened loaves of wheat flour, with other sacrifices, were then offered. The Feast of Tabernacles took place on the 15th of October, and marked the ingathering of the vintage and the conclusion of the agricultural year. The people then lived in booths or tabernacles erected for the occasion, and the eight days of this life were regarded as commemorating the wanderings in the Wilderness. The Day of Atonement was the great Fast of the Jewish year: the high priest then selected by lot one of two chosen goats; this one was offered to Jehovah, and its blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. Over the other goat, the "scape-goat", the sins of the people were confessed, and the animal was then driven into the wilderness, symbolically bearing with it the sins of the people.

The Tabernacle, in the time of Moses, was a simple tent, perhaps better known as "the tent of meeting". The elaborate structure described in the Pentateuch is, like the

*Ex. xxv–xxvii.

fully developed legal code, the outcome of later ideas. The Israelites, at the time of the Exodus, had neither the materials nor the artistic knowledge for the construction of the fabric, or the elaborate ornaments upon which later generations looked back. The tent of meeting was a symbol to the Israelites of the fact that Jehovah was ever with them, and yet that He was unapproachable in his purity and holiness. The shrine contained the ark, a wooden chest, in which were placed the tables of the law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. The high priest, with the priests and the Levites, performed the service about the tent of meeting, and the other religious duties. The distinction between these classes was of gradual growth, and it is possible that all priests were originally Levites. The most important priestly vestment was the ephod, a broad piece of material worn round the chest and under the arms supported by shoulder straps, and bearing in front a pouch or breastplate, in which were carried the Urim and Thummim, probably two stones used for casting the sacred lot.

CHAPTER VI

From Sinai to the Death of Moses

At the very foot of the holy mountain a scene then took place, which showed that Aaron and the people were very far from understanding the

spirit of obedience to Jehovah. Aaron agreed to the people's demands and made the golden calf, not with any intention of substituting a new god for Jehovah, but in order to represent Him in outward form, and to become himself the high priest of Jehovah. The anger of Moses was thus natural: Aaron's act was calculated to degrade worship to formalism and ceremony alone, and this was utterly against the spirit of Jehovah's worship. Moses therefore called upon all who wished to remain faithful to Jehovah, to avenge this outrage upon his commandment. The Levites, the members of his own family, took up the challenge: they slew three thousand of the people, and after this chastisement Moses interceded with Jehovah for the nation. It was probably after, and in consequence of this event, that the Levites became the priest tribe. Their loyalty may have gained them the privilege of guarding the Tent of Meeting and the Ark, and thus have brought them in permanent connection with the religious life of the nation. Moses was then summoned again into the mount and ordered to bring two new tables of stone to replace those which he had broken in his indignation. The covenant with Jehovah was renewed, and Moses was told that after the entry into the promised land the Canaanites were to be utterly exterminated, lest they should corrupt the people with their idolatry.

Ex. xxxii–xxxiv.

The onward march was now resumed, guided by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Jethro also accompanied the host

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KING MAKING AN OFFERING TO THE BULL APIS

at the request of his son-in-law, and under divine and human guidance the promised land could have been reached in a few months at most. But a series of events showed that the host was unfit for the work of conquest, and that years of training must elapse before they could leave the desert. The people murmured at the scanty desert fare, and were only saved from destruction by the intercession of their leader. Upon a renewal of their complaints, a plague broke out among them, and even Aaron and Miriam turned against Moses. Miriam was struck with leprosy and excluded from the camp for seven days. At length the host moved forward to Kadesh on the border of the Negeb, the desert immediately south of the promised land. Spies were sent forward to reconnoitre and examine the prospects of conquest. The two accounts of their mission differ in detail, but the report with which they returned was disheartening. The land was rich, but the peoples were powerful and the cities strong. Caleb urged an immediate attack, but the people were afraid to make the venture; they even suggested a return to Egypt. As a punishment for their want of faith, none of them except those who had counselled advance, Caleb and Joshua, were to enter the promised land. They were to remain in the desert until a new and hardier generation had grown up. This judgment inspired the Israelites with the courage of despair: in spite of the warnings of Moses they resolved to attack, and were

Num. xi–xiv.

*Num. xiii. Deut. i 22.

utterly defeated by the Amalekites and the Canaanites.

The history of the following years is entirely obscure. A few incidents show how difficult was the task which Moses had to perform.

Num. xvi, xvii. Two revolts against the power of Moses and Aaron broke out simultaneously and formed one movement. Dathan and Abiram attacked the civil power of Moses and claimed a share in the jurisdiction, apparently on the ground that they represented Reuben, the eldest tribe. Korah and his following of two Levites wished to break down the monopoly of the priesthood held by Aaron and his family; they represented that as all the people were holy, i.e. separated for the service of God, Aaron could claim no pre-eminence. They were told to put their claims to the test, and appeared the next day to take part in the ministration at the tent of meeting, when they were suddenly consumed by fire. Dathan and Abiram were summoned to appear before Moses, but refused to come; Moses then went to their tents, pronounced judgment upon them, and the earth swallowed them up. A plague then broke out among the people, and was not stopped until Aaron made intercession for them, standing between the living and the dead. His authority was confirmed by the test of the rods, twelve of which were placed on the tent of meeting: the next day Aaron's rod was found to have budded.

Miriam, the first prophetess, then died at Kadesh. A dearth of water brought about the ex-

clusion of Moses and Aaron from the promised land: in bringing water out of the rock, Moses disobeyed the divine command to speak only. In company with Aaron he struck the rock, and for his disobedience and the arrogance with which he assumed responsibility for the miraculous result, both he and Aaron were condemned to die before the entry into Palestine.

Num. xx–xxi 10.

When, at length, the Israelites moved from Kadesh, Moses chose to march round the east shore of the Dead Sea, instead of striking directly northward through the Negeb. The King of Edom refused to give the host permission to march through his territory, and it was therefore necessary to avoid this district by a circuitous march southwards. In the course of this march Aaron was bidden to ascend to the summit of Mount Hor, a peak which cannot be identified, with Moses and Eleazar his son. There he died and was buried. His office was then taken by Eleazar, whose descendants held it until the time of David. This last stage of the wanderings evoked a final outburst of murmuring, which was punished by a plague of serpents. Moses was then divinely ordered to set up the brazen serpent, that those who were bitten might look on it and live.

*2 Kings xviii 4.
John iii 14.

At length, with the passage of the Arnon, the Israelites began their task of conquest, and first overran the territory on the eastern side of Jordan. This part of Palestine is divided into separate districts by the brooks

Num. xxi 11–35.
Num. xxxii.

Arnon, running into the Dead Sea, Jabbok and Jarmuk, tributaries of the Jordan. South of the Arnon was the territory of Moab; between the Arnon and the Jabbok lay the Ammonites, and between the Jabbok and the Jarmuk was the kingdom of Bashan. At some period before the invasion took place, the Amorites, a tribe of western Palestine, under their king, Sihon, had crossed the Jordan and driven the Ammonites and the Moabites out of their territory. Moses halted before the deep gorge of the Arnon and sent a request to Sihon asking that the host might pass through his territory to the fords of the Jordan. Sihon refused and a battle was fought at Jahaz on the upper waters of the Arnon, in the south-east of Sihon's territory. The Amorites were utterly defeated, and their territory, with the capital town of Heshbon, fell into the hands of the Israelites. This success was followed by the defeat of Og, King of Bashan, the territory immediately north of the Jabbok, and the whole of eastern Palestine was in the hands of the Hebrews. The tribes of Reuben and Gad then applied to Moses for permission to settle in the conquered territory. Half the tribe of Manasseh received the kingdom of Bashan, the Amorite district fell to Gad, and the southern tableland to Reuben. These tribes were rather pastoral than agricultural, and the land of Gilead was especially suitable for sheep rearing. They were, however, allowed to settle only upon condition that their fighting men took part in the impending cam-

paigns beyond Jordan. If they refused to help the other tribes in the work of conquest they might "be sure their sin would find them out".

Meanwhile, the King of Moab, Balak, mistrusted his power to withstand the Israelite advance by force of arms, and sent for Balaam, the son of Beor, whose fame as a prophet was widespread and who lived in Pethor, beyond the Euphrates. Balak's messengers desired the prophet to come and curse Israel. Balak appears to have had some knowledge of the true God, in which respect he may be compared with Melchisedek, who also was not of the chosen people. The prophet's blessing or curse was thought to have an efficacy of its own, independent of divine sanction, among Eastern tribes. Balaam, however, was unable "to go beyond the word of the Lord". While forced to submit to divine influence, he is desirous of acting in opposition to it, in order to secure the rewards which Balak had promised. The behaviour of the ass and the appearance of the vision in the course of the journey are warnings to Balaam that his self-deceit is impossible: he is told to go forward and to utter his divine message. Three times, upon separate spurs of the mountains of Nebo, Balaam uttered his prophecies after consulting the divine will, and on each occasion he blessed the Israelites. Their numbers, the divine favour which they enjoyed and their destiny are the burdens of his prophecies, until Balak in wrath told him to depart. Then the prophet's exaltation reaches a

Num. xxii–xxv; xxxi 1–12.

greater height and he sees the destinies of Israel stretching even beyond the Assyrian empire to world-wide importance in the dim future: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel".

At the suggestion of Balaam, the Moabites and Midianites induced the people of Israel to join in the celebration of their idolatrous rites of Baal-peor. They were punished by an outbreak of plague which was only averted by the action of Phinehas. The Midianites were annihilated and Balaam himself perished among them.

The death of Moses was now at hand. The speeches put into his mouth, in accordance with the custom of ancient writers of history, give a retrospect of past events, a blessing and warning for the future. The people may infer the reality of the divine power from a consideration of the great things that Jehovah has done for them. If they obey Jehovah, all will be well; if they fall into idolatry, terrible will be their punishment. He may not himself lead them across the Jordan, but in Joshua they may have all confidence. From Pisgah, the spur of Nebo, where Balaam had prophesied, Moses beheld the promised land. Then he died and was buried in an unknown spot. "His eye was not dim nor his natural force abated."

Deut. xxxi–xxxiv.

The career and character of the great and dominating figure in Hebrew history is marked by self-sacrifice: he "esteemed the reproach of Christ

greater riches than the pleasures of sin in Egypt". He might have enjoyed high place and power at the Egyptian court, but he preferred to make Jehovah king among His people; and this task Moses performed, not merely by proclaiming precepts to the people, but by giving them a share of that religious spirit which animated himself. He led out a horde of undisciplined slaves from Egypt: by dint of faith, and by undeterred and patient statesmanship, he left a free and powerful nation upon the banks of the Jordan, ready to advance and conquer, a nation which, in spite of many faults and backslidings, retained for centuries to come a consciousness of its high destiny and its unique relations to Jehovah.

CHAPTER VII

The Conquest

Joshua, in a series of campaigns, succeeded in defeating the main bodies of his Canaanite enemies and in allotting various portions of Palestine to the tribes. But his conquest was very far from final. Not until the time of David were the Israelites in undisturbed possession of the land. Their national development was therefore greatly influenced by the geographical configuration of Palestine, and by the Canaanitish tribes who were found in the country. Hence it will be convenient at this point to consider what influence was exerted by these causes.

Palestine, like Attica, was a very small stage in comparison with the importance of the events which were to take place upon its soil. Bounded on the north by the snow-capped mountains of Lebanon, on the west by the Mediterranean, and on the south and east by the desert, its greatest length is about 150 miles and its greatest breadth about 90 miles. But within this narrow area the widest contrasts of climate and physical features are to be found. We first note four main lines of country running north and south. On the seaboard is a fertile plain, the southern part of which was held by the Philistines, while the northern part below Mount Carmel, which breaks its progress to Phœnicia, was known as the plain of Sharon. As this was one of the most beautiful parts of the country it was naturally the chief point of contention, and the last of which the Israelites gained full possession. Then comes the continuation of the mountain range of Lebanon, broken by valleys and fading away into low hills as it reaches the desert on the south, the Negeb. The valley of the Jordan divides these uplands from the similar heights beyond Jordan, the land of Gilead, and the pastures of Moab. The Jordan, when it reaches the land of Galilee, is 600 feet below sea level, and descends to 1300 feet below sea level in its course to the Dead Sea. In this deep valley the climate and vegetation are almost tropical by contrast with the conditions which prevail upon the mountains of Judah and Gilead, some 3000 feet above. The uniformity of these four central lines of country is broken by the

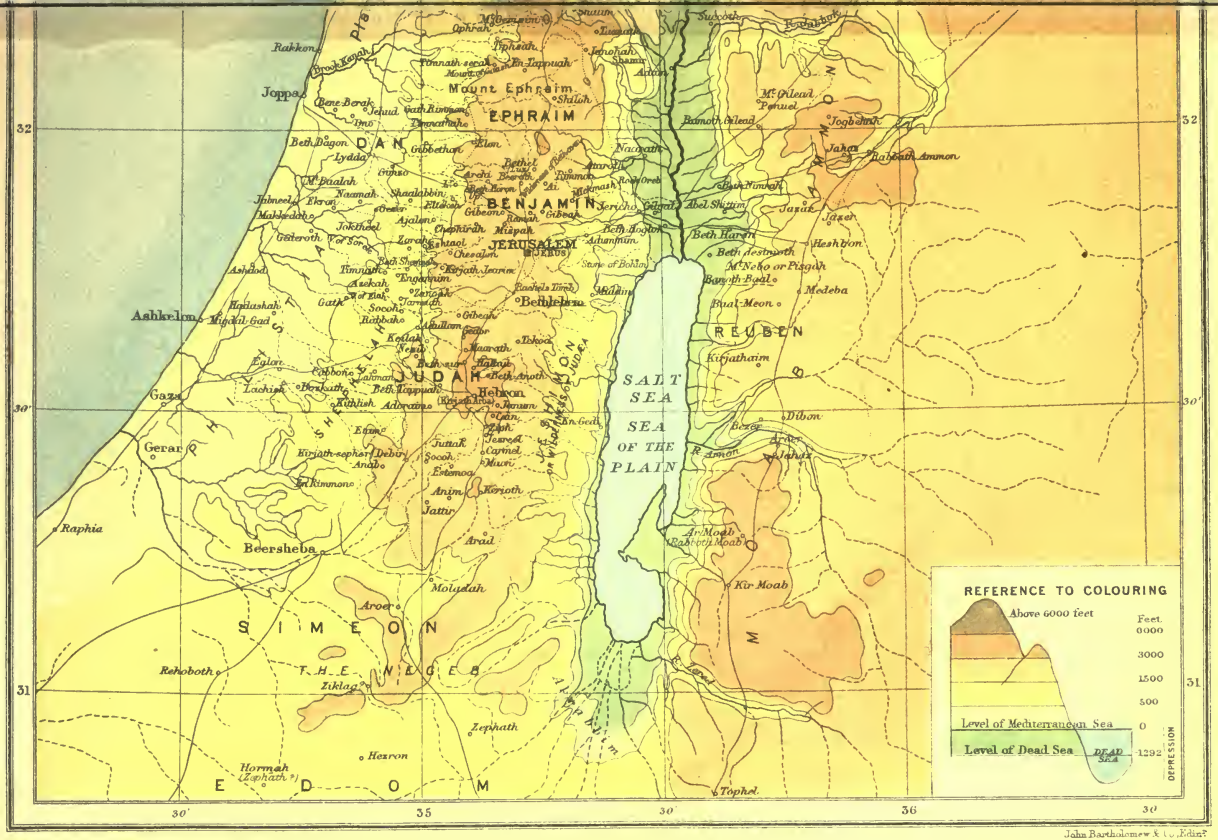
plain of Esdraelon, stretching eastward from Mount Carmel. Through this plain, one of the battle grounds of Israel and of the ancient world, ran the chief trade route from Asia to Africa. Again, between the maritime plain and the mountains of Judah, lay a transition district, the Shephelah, a range of low hills, which were the scene of many struggles between the Israelites and the Philistines. Similarly, upon the south, the mountains of Judah gradually declined through the Negeb until they ended in the desert.

Such diversities of plain and mountain, of heat and cold, permitted the cultivation of products sufficiently various to make the country self-supporting. Corn, the vine, the olive, and the fig would all flourish in the land, while for cattle-rearing and sheep-farming there was rich opportunity in the uplands of Gilead and Moab. Hence the Israelites were under no necessity to trade with foreign nations. On the other hand, the geographical position of Palestine and its configuration produced two contrary effects. Palestine was naturally a buffer state between Egypt and the great Eastern empires upon the Euphrates, while trade routes from Damascus and the East ran through the country. But both armies and traders were accustomed to follow the plains, while the Hebrews in the early part of their history kept to the central mountains, to which they were at first confined by their inability to conquer their native enemies. Thus they maintained their exclusive character and acquired the hardy and enduring disposition

peculiar to mountain tribes. Judah and Ephraim are the real centres of national life: the outlying tribes, Simeon, Reuben, Issachar, Naphtali, and the like, become of less importance as the history proceeds. But a further consequence of mountain life, as in Greece, was lack of union. Religion and language were the only bonds of union. No Israelitish king ever succeeded in overcoming the tendency to disruption, and Ephraim and Judah were at all times separate and often antagonistic. The Israelite character, as formed in the desert, was further strengthened by mountain life. In the Euphrates valley mountain tribes would come down upon the plains, conquer the enervated plain dwellers, and remain paramount, until they also deteriorated under the influence of the civilization they had overpowered, and fell victims to a new and hardier race of invaders. A similar process upon a small scale may be seen in history of the peoples who occupied the plain of Esdraelon. With the spread of Phœnician culture and with the abandonment of mountain for plain, the degeneracy of northern Israel began.

Palestine first appears as part of the first Babylonian empire, and as peopled by a number of petty tribes, either settled in walled towns or living a nomadic life. As the Babylonian empire declined the country passed under the sway of Egypt: during the period preceding the Exodus, the Tell-el-Amarna letters show that the Hittite empire was pressing hard upon Palestine from the north, while Egypt's hold of the country was gradually relaxing.

PHYSICAL MAP
OF
PALESTINE
English Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40
SYRIA
DAMASCUS
Sidon
Zarephath
Tyre
(Zor)
SIDONIANS
MOUNT LEBANON
Anti Lebanon
Mount Hermon
R. Abana
R. Pharpar
R. Jordan
R. Litani
DAN
Laish
Baal Gad
Dan
Laish
Kinnah
Hosah
Hosah
Edrei
Beth Anath
Kedesh Naphtali
Waters of Merom
Hazor
Iron
Ahlab
ASHER
Hammon
Dan Jaan
Rimmon
Ramah
En Hakkin
Achshaph
Abdon
Amad
Mishal
Rabbashath
NAPHTALI
Achshaph
Helkath
Rimmon
Acco
Neiel
Hakor
Hukkok
Cabul
Zaddim
Sea of Kinnereth
ZEBULUN
Rimmon
Kitron
Nahallal
Adamah
Bethlehem
Ajalon
Daberath
Jabneel
Harosheth
Shimron
Jephthah
Chesulloth
Inhor
Endor
Plain of Esdraelon
Dor
Megiddo
Anaharath
Ibleam
Hadad Rimmon
Jezreel
Beth Shean
ISSACHAR
Anem
Yaanah
Bethshan
Bethshan
En Haddah
Engannim
Megiddo
Bileam
Mt. Gilboa
Dothan
Rabbith
Jarmuth
Tirzah
Bezek
Debir
Abel Meholah
Jordan
Sea of Sharon
MANASSEH
GESHURITES
NAPHTHALI
GOLAN
BASHAN
ARGOB
MANASSEH
Ashtaroth Karnaim
HAVOTH JAIR
HAURAN
Aphek
Golan
Edrei
Ramath Mizpeh
Bosora
LAND OF TOB
Bethshan
Jabesh Gilead
Mahanaim?
Mizpeh
GILEAD
MEDITERRANEAN
SEA


Mount Ephraim
EPHRAIM
DAN
BENJAMIN
JERUSALEM
JUDAH
Hebron
Bethlehem
Gibeah
Gibeon
Ramah
Mizpah
Gilgal
Jericho
Bethel
Ai
Shiloh
Shechem
Tirzah
Samaria
Dothan
Jezreel
Megiddo
Taanach
Ophrah
Tiphsah
Tappuah
Joppa
Gaza
Ashkelon
Ashdod
Ekron
Gath
Lachish
Gerar
Beersheba
Raphia
Rehoboth
Ziklag
Hormah (Zephath?)
Hezron
Zephath
Arad
Moladah
Aroer
Kiriath-sepher (Debir)
Anab
Eshtemoa
Anim
Jattir
Kerioth
Juttah
Carmel
Maon
Ziph
Hebron
Adullam
Keilah
Mareshah
Beth-Shemesh
Beth-Tappuah
Eshtaol
Zorah
Kiriath-jearim
Gibeah
Ramoth-gilead
Mahanaim
Gilgal
Jabesh-gilead
Bezek
Shechem
Beth-shan
Jezreel
Ashdod
Ashkelon
Gaza
Ekron
Joppa
Rakkon
Beth-dagon
Lydda
Gezer
Aijalon
Zorah
Eshtaol
Zeresh
Kiriath-jearim
Beth-shemesh
Timnah
Ashkelon
Ashdod
Ekron
Gath
Lachish
Gerar
Beersheba
Raphia
Rehoboth
Ziklag
Hormah
Hezron
Zephath
Arad
Moladah
Aroer
Kiriath-sepher
Anab
Eshtemoa
Anim
Jattir
Kerioth
Juttah
Carmel
Maon
Ziph
Jezreel

From 1195 B.C., when the Amorites were defeated by Rameses III, a successor to Merenptah, until the invasion of Shishak in 933, Egypt attempted no interference in Palestine. When Joshua began his invasion, Palestine acknowledged the suzerainty of neither Egypt nor Babylon; it was a kind of no-man's land, inhabited by a number of small Semitic tribes, the Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Jebusites, who lived in towns and villages, ruled over by petty kings, and at constant variance among themselves. The nomad Bedouin tribes, the Amalekites and Midianites, continually terrorized the country when they left the desert to make raids upon the cultivated districts. The Amorites, Moabites, and Ammonites, upon the east of Jordan, have already been mentioned. Of great importance to the early history of the Israelites were the Philistines, who held the greater part of the coast plains upon the south-west, with their five cities, Ekron, Gath, Gaza, Ashdod, and Askelon. Though they gave their name to the whole country, Palestine, their nationality is doubtful: they are generally supposed to have been Cretan emigrants, who perhaps advanced northwards from the Nile delta in the search for a permanent settlement. Like the Hebrews, they were invaders, and seem to have entered the country only a short time before the Exodus. The defensive powers of the Canaanite tribes had been greatly weakened by nearly three centuries of Egyptian oppression. The resources of the country had been drained by heavy tributes and by the plundering which

followed every attempt at revolt, and the Canaanites were thus the less able to resist the hardy invaders from the desert.

The book of Joshua gives us a complete picture of the conquest of the country in a series of campaigns. The book of Judges shows that Joshua's conquest was far from thorough. The main forces of the enemies of Israel had been defeated and their confederations broken up; but the several tribes were then left to secure their hold of the districts assigned to them. In some cases they found their enemies too powerful and abandoned their district, as did Dan. Others joined together at times to make common cause against the native foe. Others were partially absorbed by the Canaanite inhabitants. Joshua overran the country, but it was impossible for him to drive the original inhabitants out of so broken and diversified a district in the short time at his disposal. When, therefore, the first fierce rush of the invaders had passed over the country, the Canaanite tribes were again able to raise their heads and to renew the struggle for their liberty.

Joshua determined to make Jericho the object of his first attack. This town was the key of southern Palestine, as it commanded the passes of the central mountains, and its capture would enable Joshua to advance upon central and southern Palestine. His first step was to send two spies to Jericho, who were befriended by Rahab. She enabled them to escape when their presence in the town was discovered, and to return

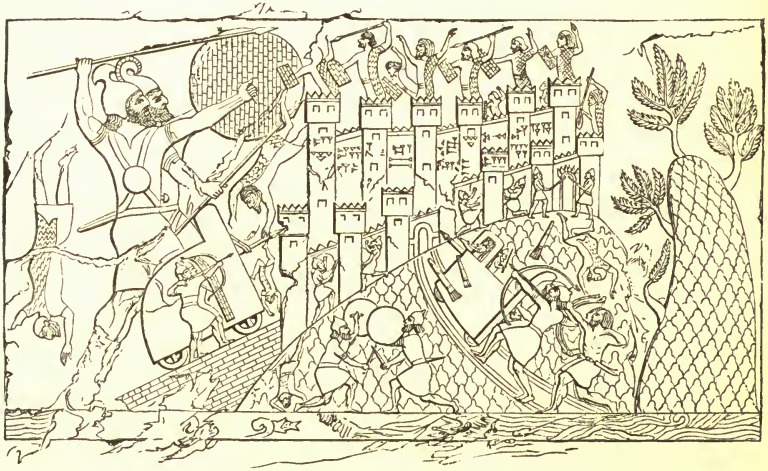
Josh. ii–vi.

to Joshua. In return, she demanded security for herself and her family after the capture of the city. Near Jericho was one of the main fords of the Jordan, and here Joshua crossed without opposition. As it was harvest time, the river was in flood, owing to the melting of the snows upon Lebanon; but when the feet of the priests bearing the ark touched the water, a passage was made, and the Israelites passed over, while the ark was held in the centre of the river bed. Two monuments of twelve stones were set up—one in the centre of the river, and one upon the further side—to commemorate the passage. Joshua then formed a permanent camp at Gilgal. There the forty years wandering came formally to an end: the manna ceased to fall, the passover feast was celebrated, and the rite of circumcision, which had been neglected in past years, was renewed. Jericho was then compassed about for six days by the priests and people carrying the ark and blowing with trumpets, until upon the seventh day the walls fell down and the city was captured. Whatever may be the true meaning of the Biblical account, upon which question scholars and critics are much divided, the fact remains that the event made a deep impression upon the Israelites, and was remembered as due rather to faith in Jehovah than to force of arms. The city was "accursed", or rather devoted to Jehovah. The silver and gold and the vessels of brass and iron were reserved for the "treasury of the house of the Lord". With the exception of Rahab and

*Heb. xi 30.

her family, the inhabitants were massacred and their property destroyed, as was usual when a city was thus devoted, to prevent objects being put to unhallowed uses. Joshua's curse upon the rebuilder of the city was fulfilled in the time of Ahab. It is noteworthy that in no other case was a formal siege undertaken. Syrian

*1 Kings xvi 34.



Attack upon Syrian fortress, showing system of machicolation

fortresses were strong, as the spies had reported—a feature of their defences was the "machicolation" common in mediæval European fortification, the construction of projecting ramparts whence missiles could be dropped upon assailants. The invaders from the desert had neither the means nor the experience necessary for storming such strongholds.

The fall of Jericho had opened the way for further advance, and Joshua next sent scouts to

discover with what prospect of success the town of Ai might be attacked. Upon their report a small force was sent against the town, but was utterly defeated. Joshua then enquired of the divine will, and was told that sin had been committed in respect of the spoil taken from Jericho. By means of the sacred lot the tribe, the family, and the individual were selected. Achan admitted that he had taken certain valuable articles, and had concealed them beneath the floor of his tent. He and his family were stoned, and his possessions burned: thus the pollution which infected the whole nation and checked national action was removed. The guilt of sin, as usual in the tribal stage of national development, was regarded as corporate, and therefore not only Achan himself but his family also were destroyed. The idea of individual responsibility for wrongdoing had not yet arisen among the Israelites. Ai was then captured by a stratagem. Joshua placed an ambush near the city gates, and attacked with his main force. He then made a feigned retreat, which drew the defenders out of their gates in pursuit, whereupon the ambushed contingent entered the town and set it on fire.

Josh. vii, viii.

Fearing lest the fate of Jericho and Ai would also fall upon themselves, the Gibeonites tricked Joshua into an alliance with them by pretending that they lived beyond the borders of Palestine. Hitherto the Canaanites had continued to act in isolation; but these events forced them into a coalition formed by five kings of cen-

Josh. ix, x.

tral and southern Canaan, who represented the cities of Hebron, Jebus, Eglon, Jarmuth, and Lachish. The first object of the coalition was to punish the Gibeonites for their defection. The latter immediately appealed to Joshua for help. Joshua attacked the confederate army at Gibeon, and the fate of Palestine was decided by the battle, which ended in the rout of the five kings and their flight to Bethhoron. The Biblical account contains a quotation from the Book of Jasher, a collection of national poetry, which also contained David's lament over Saul and Jonathan:

> "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,
> And thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon".

The author of this poem invited the sun and moon to halt, not in order to lengthen the day, but in order to show their wonder and amazement at the victory. The imagery is thus comparable with many similar hyperboles to be found in Hebrew poetry; "the floods clap their hands", "the mountains skip like rams, and the little hills like young sheep". There is no reason, therefore, for misinterpreting the quotation, as the editor of the book of Joshua did, and assuming that the functions of the universe were miraculously suspended. There is, however, a possible circumstance which may have given rise to the hyperbole in this case: as the Israelites pursued their foes up the slope of Bethhoron in the afternoon of the battle, the sun was low above the visible horizon; but when they reached the summit, and the ground fell away

John Bartholomew & Co., Edinr.

before them, it was seen that the day was by no means over, and the imagination of a poet may well have regarded the sun as standing still in amazement. The fact that we are able to trace the origin of the difficulty in this instance makes it conceivable that the Book of Jasher may have been drawn upon for historical purposes in other

Assyrian placing the foot upon the neck of conquered enemy

cases, and that the account of the taking of Jericho may be partly derived from some poetical source.

In the course of the flight the five kings took refuge in the cave of Makkedah. Joshua ordered the mouth of the cave to be closed while the pursuit continued. On his return the kings were drawn out and killed, after the princes of Israel had placed their feet upon their necks in token of their complete victory. The battle of Gibeon or of Bethhoron—both names are used—made the Israelites masters of central and southern Palestine. Joshua

then turned southward and conquered the most important towns, afterwards returning to Gilgal. As has been already stated, though immediate opposition was crushed and his rear was secured, the work of conquest was far from complete, and afterwards occupied the energies of the tribes of Judah and Simeon.

*Judg. i.

The decisive victory of Gibeon aroused the kings of northern Palestine to a sense of their danger. Their southern frontier now lay open to the attacks of the Israelites. The kings of the north, therefore, united under the leadership of the King of Hazor, whose royal title was the Jabin, as the King of Egypt was known as the Pharaoh. Joshua surprised the allies near Lake Merom, before they had time to deploy in battle array or were able to make use of their chariots. The fugitives were pursued as far as Sidon, and the last of the great campaigns was over.

Josh. xi.

Probably at this time, to mark the conclusion of the conquest, the solemn service was held upon Mount Ebal, in the centre of Ephraim. Joshua built an altar of unhewn stones, offered sacrifices upon it, and wrote upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses. The people were gathered half upon Mount Ebal, and half upon Mount Gerizim opposite; in accordance with the directions given by Moses, the curses were read from Mount Ebal and answered by the recitation of the blessings from Mount Gerizim. The people thus confirmed their acceptance of the law. and their belief that the continuance of their

Josh. viii 30–35.

*Deut. xi 29; xxvii 12.

prosperity depended upon their obedience to the will of Jehovah.

Tradition relates that Joshua's campaigns lasted for seven years; but between the first crossing of the Jordan and Joshua's death a much longer period must have elapsed. The country had been overrun and the main principles of the future settlement were laid down. East of the Jordan the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, had received their districts from Moses. On the west, the leading tribes of Judah and Ephraim established themselves in the south and north, and became centres round which the weaker tribes gathered by degrees. Even during Joshua's lifetime the dangers of which the book of Judges continually speaks had become obvious. Weary of war, anxious to begin a settled life, and finding themselves among people whose language and nationality were not very dissimilar to their own, the Israelites were tempted to form treaties and to contract marriages with the Canaanites, and so ran the risk, through indolence, of losing their own distinctive religion and national characteristics. The burden of guerrilla warfare, which was left for the several tribes to undertake after the general conquest, was regarded as unduly heavy. Joshua convened a general assembly at Shiloh, whither he had transferred his camp and the sanctuary from Gilgal after the last campaign, and roused the zeal of the wavering tribes by speeches urging them to begin the conquest of the districts destined for their occupation. The

*Josh. xv, xix. Gen. xlix.

Jos'h. xviii.

tribes concerned each sent out three spies to collect information about the task before them, and on their return Joshua cast lots and assigned districts to the tribes before the tent of meeting at Shiloh. The exact lines of demarcation exhibited by modern maps of "Palestine among the Tribes" were certainly not laid down at this time, and perhaps never existed. The best picture of the tribal situation at the close of the conquest is that preserved for us at the end of the book of Genesis as the blessing of Jacob. As has been already stated, the rivalry between Judah and Ephraim, which ended in the disruption of the monarchy, begins at the close of the conquest.

After the conquest the transjordanic tribes returned to the districts which Moses had assigned to them, and, before crossing the Jordan, set up the altar of Ed as a memorial of their share in the national wars. Their intention was misunderstood, but Phinehas explained to the tribes that the altar was a memorial and not an attempt to make a new religious centre. Of transjordanic Manasseh nothing is afterwards heard. Neither Reuben nor Gad answered the call of Deborah. Gad was certainly the most powerful of the tribes beyond Jordan. Gilead was the last refuge of Saul's dynasty and the only Israelite stronghold on the east of Jordan. As might be expected of tribes which retained something of their old nomadic habits, it was the home of conservatism, and from Gilead Elijah came forth to protest against the luxury and immorality of the house of Ahab.

Josh. xxii.

The northern tribes, Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun and Issachar, held the district from the Lake of Galilee to the Phœnician coast. They supported Barak, but little is heard of them afterwards. They were separated from the central tribes by the plain of Esdraelon, which they were unable to wrest from the Canaanites. The references in Jacob's blessing show that they occupied a rich and fertile district. The description of Issachar as "the strong ass, couching down between two burdens . . . . and a servant unto tribute", seems to imply that little effort was made in this direction to dispossess the Canaanite inhabitants.

In the centre of the country were Ephraim, half of Manasseh, Benjamin, and Dan. Ephraim held the major part of the province afterwards known as Samaria and containing Shiloh, the chief religious centre in the country in early times. Ephraim's claims to pre-eminence are advanced upon several occasions in the book of Judges, as will afterwards be seen. Dan and Benjamin were both small and warlike tribes. The Danites, however, were unable to hold their ground against the Philistines, on whose frontiers they were situated, and therefore migrated to Laish in the north of Palestine. The Benjamites were reputed to be lefthanded, and were famed as skilful archers and slingers. After the disruption of the kingdom some of them were incorporated in the tribe of Judah, from which they were at first separated by a line of Canaanite fortresses.

Judg. i.

The south was held by Judah, with Simeon in

the extreme south, about Beersheba. Simeon was soon absorbed by Judah and disappeared from history. The book of Judges opens with an account of the joint attack made by Judah and Simeon upon Adoni-Bezek. Judah is not mentioned in the Song of Deborah, and apparently took no part in a campaign which chiefly concerned the northern tribes. The tribe of Levi had no special district assigned to them, but were distributed throughout the country in forty-six cities, including the six cities of refuge; in these a man might take refuge when pursued by the avengers of some blood feud.

Josh. xxiii, xxiv.

Joshua concluded his life's work with two speeches to the people. The first is a speech of warning and encouragement; the second a historical retrospect, showing what Jehovah had done for His chosen people. Israel will prosper as long as she remains loyal to Jehovah. Joshua retired to Timnath-Serah, a village in Ephraim for which he had asked as his share of the conquest, and there ended his life. He was essentially a man of action. Appointed to perform a definite task, he carried it out by dint of unswerving faith in Jehovah and indomitable pertinacity. "Choose ye whom ye will serve. . . . As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah", are among the last of his recorded words. They seem to imply some doubt of Israel's capacity to continue the pursuit of the high ideals placed before her.

CHAPTER VIII

The Judges

The interval between the death of Joshua and the birth of Samuel cannot be exactly estimated, but probably amounted to some hundred and fifty years.[1] It was a period of transition and of disunion. "There was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The several tribes were now left to complete the conquest of the districts assigned to them. The task proved beyond their strength in the majority of cases, for several reasons. In the first place, they were attracted by the Canaanite civilization, which was probably far superior to their own; the fact that the native tribes spoke a not dissimilar language and worshipped gods which could be identified with Jehovah, at least in name, often removed any initial antagonism that might have divided Hebrew from Canaanite. In the second place, the sense of nationalism was undermined by geographical causes. Judah hardly appears except at the outset, throughout the age of the Judges. Ephraim was cut off from the northern tribes by the plain of Esdraelon, where the Canaanite chariot forces proved invincible. Hence, there is no central

*Judges xxi 25.

[1] The chronology of the Book of Judges remains a disputed problem. Petrie remarks that three districts are named, the North and Galilee; the East, Gilead and Moab; the West and Ephraim. No judge is stated to have ruled more than one of these districts at any one time. Hence events may have occurred contemporaneously within them, which are narrated as though they occurred in succession. See *Israel and Egypt*, p. 54.

sanctuary or government, no national leader, and little attempt at concerted action. The points to be noted during this period as preliminary to the monarchy are the attempts of one tribe, Ephraim, to assert superiority or hegemony over the rest, and the attempts at a hereditary monarchy made by one or two of the Judges.

The great bond of national unity thus far among the Hebrews was their religion. When they abandoned their faith in Jehovah, they lost their political unity. At such times the native tribes asserted their superiority, and when the burden became too heavy the Hebrews rose to an endeavour to crush their oppressors. Such attempts were conducted by the "Judges". The name is misleading. The Hebrew name for these chieftains was *Shophetim*, a term identical with the Phœnician or Carthaginian *Suffetes* of classical times. The *Shophet* is primarily a military dictator, who gained his power by personal force of character and by exploits in war. When he had thus won his position he could, and did, assume the civil functions which, under Joshua, were performed by the tribal elders. In the latter part of this period we shall observe a distinct tendency for the office to become hereditary, a tendency which eventually led to the demand for a monarchy under Samuel. There is no evidence to show that the succession of Judges was continuous. Some are to us only names, such as Tola, Elon, Abdon, &c.; others, doubtless, existed and have left no name. But in the early part of the period

the Judges were created simply to meet special emergencies.

The first oppression came upon the Israelites from the place of their origin. The King of Padan-Aram, Chushan-Rishathaim, overpowered the country for eight years, until deliverance, of which no details are given, was effected by Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. Caleb was in possession of Hebron: he it was who had urged the invasion of Palestine immediately after the Exodus. Othniel may therefore be regarded as representing the tribe of Judah. The country was then overrun by the Moabites, who crossed the Jordan and made Jericho, the city of palm trees, their centre. The Benjamites seem to have been specially oppressed, and when they came up to Jericho to pay their tribute, one of their leaders, Ehud, found an opportunity of assassinating the Moabite king. As he was left-handed, he was able to gird a long dagger upon his right side, where the royal guards would not expect to find a weapon. He left the tribute-bearers on their return journey at Gilgal, went back to the palace and obtained a private interview with Eglon, whom he stabbed to death. He was able to escape before his deed was discovered, and raised an army of followers in the mountains of Ephraim. The fords of the Jordan were seized and the Moabite garrison was massacred. Of the next deliverer, Shamgar, we hear nothing except that he slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-

Judges iii.

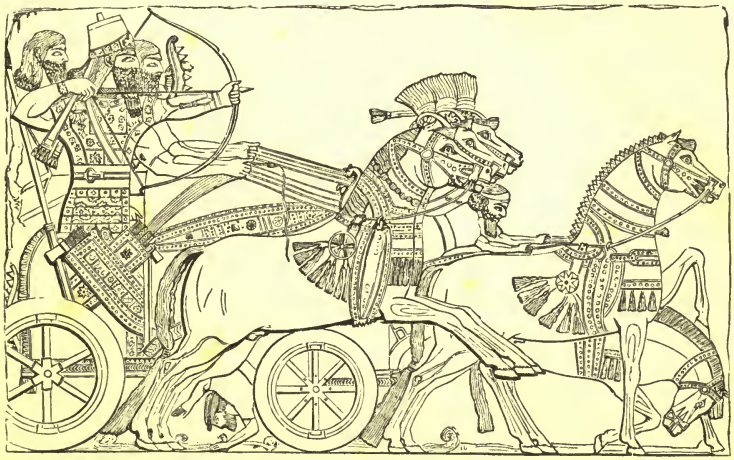
*Judges i 10–12. Num. xiii 30.

goad, an exploit also mentioned in the Song of Deborah.

The deliverance effected by Deborah and Barak is described in far greater detail. The four tribes in the north were cut off from their compatriots in the centre of Palestine by the plain of Esdraelon, which they had never subdued, owing to their lack of cavalry or chariots. Under the Jabin, the King of Hazor in the far north, and Sisera of Harosheth, his captain in the west, the Canaanites had recovered from the defeat inflicted upon them by Joshua, and had reduced the Israelites to servitude. The roads were unsafe for traffic, the cultivated lands were plundered, and the population was disarmed. The prophetess Deborah then inspired Barak to gather an army at Mount Tabor; probably she also used her influence with other tribal chiefs. The place of meeting was well chosen: on the mountain slopes the chariots of the enemy could not operate, while the Israelites could readily attack if opportunity offered. The opportunity came with a terrible storm which turned the plain into a bog, while the little stream of Kishon overflowed its banks. The heavy chariots were unable to move, and the struggle of horses and drivers had produced utter confusion when the light-armed Israelites attacked. The line of flight of the routed and fugitive host was commanded by Meroz, an Israelite village, but the inhabitants declined to join their compatriots, or the Canaanite host might have been annihilated. While Barak was pursuing the fugitives towards Harosheth, Sisera abandoned

Judges iv–v.

his useless chariot and took refuge in the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber of the Kenite tribe, old allies of the Israelites, who had entered the promised land with them, but still retained their nomadic habits. As the Kenites were at peace with the Jabin, Sisera hoped to find a hiding-place among them. Jael, however, offered him hospitality, and



Heavy War-chariot (Assyrian)

then treacherously murdered him in his sleep. With the death of Sisera, the Canaanite oppression came to an end.

There is no doubt that the Song of Deborah is earlier in point of time than the prose narrative. The two accounts differ in points of detail: the poem does not mention the Jabin; the locality of the battle is differently stated; Zebulon and Naphtali are alone mentioned in the prose account,

whereas the poem represents all the tribes of central and northern Canaan as taking part in the struggle, with the exception of Dan and Asher. The fierce exultation of the poem over Sisera's death, the praise of Jael, and the picture of the vain expectation of Sisera's household for his homecoming, are fully characteristic of the age. Jael was guilty of treachery in the worst degree: but the age was wild and brutal, and its moral standards were as yet very far removed from those of the Sermon on the Mount. The general disunion of the Hebrew tribes is also very clearly reflected in the poem. The transjordanic tribes were inactive and the seacoast tribes probably had an interest in the maritime trade of the Canaanites. Judah and Simeon are not mentioned at all.

Judges vi–viii.

As years went by, the Israelites relapsed into their former disunion, and were unable to make head against the marauding Midianites and Amalekites, who made incursions from the desert, drove the Israelites to their mountain retreats, reaped the crops which they had sown, and carried off any cattle to be found. At length a deliverer was found in Gideon, of the family of Abiezer, who lived at Ophrah, near Shechem. Two of the Midianite leaders, Zebah and Zalmunna, had killed his brethren on Mount Tabor in the course of one of their raids, and Gideon was resolved to take vengeance upon them. He is represented as receiving a divine call when he was threshing wheat by the winepress, where he concealed his stores from the Midianites. Gideon's character

throughout the story is marked by caution and prudence, qualities which appear most strongly when he is contrasted with such a figure as Jephthah. Accordingly, he asked for a sign to show the divine nature of the message, and conviction was followed by the belief that his death would be immediate because he had seen God.[1] His fears were dispelled, and the event was marked by building an altar at the spot. Before any attack could be made upon the national oppressors the favour of Jehovah must be regained. Gideon accordingly destroyed the altar and the pole sacred to Baal, and built an altar to Jehovah. The worshippers demanded the death of Gideon; but his father argued that Baal should be capable of pleading for himself. Hence Gideon received the name Jerubbaal, "let Baal plead": undesigned, perhaps, was the coincidence, but the name may also mean "the champion of Jehovah". The fact that "Baal" means "Lord", and might be, and was, used for Jehovah is a partial cause for the identification of Jehovah with local Canaanite deities.

Gideon then collected his fellow tribesmen, and also called the northern tribes, Zebulon, Naphtali, and Manasseh, to his help. Before proceeding to action he again required a sign, and his caution was satisfied by the twofold miracle of the fleece and the dew. He was then bidden to reduce the size of his army, and ordered all who feared the impending

[1] The idea that man could not see God and live is common in the Old Testament. See Gen. xvi 13, Exod. xx 19, xxxiii 20, Judg. xiii 22, Isaiah vi 5. For the reason, see St. Peter's speech, Luke v 8.

conflict to return home. The remainder were then sifted by the test of their behaviour when drinking water, and Gideon was finally left with three hundred men. Before making his attack, Gideon entered the enemy's camp by night with his armour-bearer and heard the recital of a dream which removed his last doubts of success. He divided his small force into three parts, arming them with trumpets, and torches hidden in pitchers. At the word of command the pitchers were broken, the torches waved, and the trumpets blown. The sudden uproar and the flash of lights inspired the Midianites with sudden panic, and they fled in utter confusion to the fords of the Jordan. The men of Ephraim, who had received warning from Gideon, stationed themselves at Bethbarah, and intercepted the fugitives, whom they massacred. The slaughter of the princes, Oreb and Zeeb, and afterwards of Zeba and Zalmunna, was ever regarded by the Israelites as one of their great national exploits. The Ephraimites were irritated because they had been asked to take only a minor share in the action, but Gideon turned away their wrath with a diplomatic reply. In the course of the pursuit beyond Jordan, two Israelite cities, Succoth and Penuel, refused to supply Gideon's exhausted troops with food; the elders of Succoth were beaten with thorns, and Penuel was destroyed by him upon his return home.

*Ps. lxxxiii 11, 12.

This great victory established Gideon as the national champion, and he received the offer of the kingship. This honour he modestly declined,

declaring that Jehovah was the sole King of Israel. At the same time Gideon seems to have been practically king: he had a number of wives, and left seventy sons, with the usual consequences of jealousy and intrigue which are characteristic of Oriental households. He also used the spoil captured from the Midianites to make an ephod for the purpose of consulting the will of Jehovah, a practice not regarded at that time as incompatible with the purity of the national religion. Upon the whole, Gideon stands out as a prudent and diplomatic ruler who laid careful plans to secure success, and was unspoiled by success when it came to him. The general disunion of the country is shown by the refusal of Succoth and Penuel to aid his troops, and the ambition of Ephraim to be regarded as the leading tribe explains the anger which the Ephraimites showed because they had not been invited to share in the struggle at its outset. Similar remonstrances at a later date met with a very different answer from Jephthah, whose character in this point also is in strong contrast with that of Gideon.

The extent of Gideon's power is clear from the fact that his son was able to succeed to his position. We here observe the first tendencies to a monarchical form of government which eventually brought about the kingdom of Saul. The attempt to begin a hereditary monarchy proved unsuccessful in this instance, partly owing to the incompetency and unfitness of Gideon's son, Abimelech. He was a half-breed,

Judges ix.

his mother being a Canaanite woman of Shechem; her family persuaded the Shechemites to support Abimelech, and to provide him with funds for the hire of a band of mercenaries. With the aid of these he slew his brethren at Ophrah, and thus left no one to dispute his succession to Gideon's power. The youngest of the brethren, Jotham, contrived to escape the massacre, and when the Shechemites assembled for the coronation of Abimelech, Jotham addressed them from Mount Gerizim, and delivered the fable of the trees and their king, the moral of which, as applied to the case of Abimelech, was that the valuable members of the community are reluctant to undertake the responsibilities of power, while the worthless are eager to grasp them. Jotham taunted his brother with his descent from a Canaanitish maidservant, and the Shechemites with their ingratitude to the house of Gideon. The mutual jealousy of the Israelites and Canaanites, who were living side by side in Shechem, had raised Abimelech to his new position, and was to be the cause of his overthrow.

Abimelech maintained his position for three years. The Shechemites then declined to recognize his authority, and asserted their independence by plundering the caravans which passed through their district. The disaffected soon found a leader in the person of Gaal, who was definitely acknowledged during the vintage festival, when excitement was naturally strongest. Abimelech had gained his position because his mother was a Canaanite; the fact that his father was an Israelite was now made

an excuse for rebellion against him. Both he and his governor in Shechem, Zebul, belonged to a race which had once been subject to the Shechemites. Zebul remained loyal to Abimelech, and informed him of the revolt; the ruler at once marched upon the seditious city, dividing his force into four bodies, who were to attack simultaneously. Gaal then marched out of Shechem, driven by the taunts of Zebul, to prove the reality of his threats. He was utterly defeated, he and his followers were destroyed and the city was laid in ruins. The revolt had spread to Thebez, another Ephraimite town. While attacking the citadel, Abimelech was struck down by a millstone thrown by a woman, and ordered his armour-bearer to slay him, that he might not suffer the disgrace of death at a woman's hands. His forces were dispersed and his kingdom fell to pieces. Racial jealousy, which Abimelech was unable to compose, thus ended this first attempt at monarchy. Raised to power by Canaanites, he was chiefly supported by Israelites, but the two races were unable to live together in peace for any length of time.

Judges x–xii.

The two judges next mentioned, Tola and Jair, are nothing more than names to us. Jair, a Gileadite, had thirty sons, who governed thirty cities and rode in state, which facts dimly point to another attempt to found a monarchy. A Gileadite also was Jephthah, the next figure of any note with whom we meet. The Ammonites had at one time possessed the land of Gilead, but before the time of Joshua's invasion had been

driven out by the Amorites, who had then been crushed by Joshua at Jahaz. The Ammonites were reasserting their rights to their former territory, and had even made incursions into western Palestine. The Israelites in Gilead were without a leader, and after assembling at Mizpeh to consider the situation, they appealed to Jephthah to help them. Jephthah was an outlaw or exile, despised by his family because of his base birth, and had become the leader of a band of marauders. The fact that he conducted his raids in the land of Tob, north of his own country, seems to show that he was not entirely devoid of patriotic feeling. He undertook to lead the Israelites on condition that he should be their ruler when he had brought the war to a successful conclusion. The account of the interchange of messages between Jephthah and the king of the Ammonites has been regarded as an interpolation, for the reason that Chemosh was the god of the Moabites: hence it has been supposed that the argument originally related to a dispute with Moab. In any case the incident is noteworthy, as showing that the local gods were recognized by the Israelites as powerful within their own domains. The course of the argument attributed to Jephthah is to show that the Ammonites should blame the weakness of their local god for their loss of territory and should bow to the inevitable. At Mizpeh Jephthah made the vow to sacrifice "whatsoever came forth from the doors of his house" to meet him upon his return. The pathetic death of his daughter in fulfilment of the

vow was commemorated by yearly lamentation. The tribe of Ephraim again took offence, as in the time of Gideon, because they had not been invited to share in the war. They received no soft answer turning away wrath upon this occasion. They were defeated in the ensuing conflict, and the means adopted to detect the Ephraimite fugitives has given to our language the word Shibboleth.

Jephthah's rule seems to have ended with his death and probably did not extend far beyond Gilead. Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon are barely mentioned as judges, though the first named apparently attempted to extend his rule as Jair had done. The history of the period is entirely obscure, and is connected only with the more striking personalities who appeared from time to time.

Samson is a personality who would have commanded attention in any age. This Hebrew Hercules is the champion of the tribe of Dan in their struggles with the Philistines, who eventually drove them to seek another home in the far north. Samson is by no means a ruler of the type of Gideon or Jephthah: to find him regarded as a champion of religion gives us a certain sense of incongruity. He was a popular hero rejoicing in his strength, making the stupidity of his enemies the butt of his own wit, entangled in dangers by his failings, and extricating himself by his strength; inspired far more by personal passions and animosities than by zeal for Jehovah, and meeting his death in a glorious revenge upon his

Judges xiii–xvi.

persecutors. His life, in short, reflects the rude manners and the turbulence of the age in which he lived.

Samson, like Samuel and John the Baptist, was a "Nazirite", and dedicated to the service of Jehovah before his birth. His birth was foretold by an angel, the manifestation of whose divine nature filled Manoah, Samson's father, with apprehensions of death. The Nazirite vow forbade the cutting of the hair or the drinking of wine. As will afterwards appear in the case of the Rechabites, it was connected with a conservative movement, the desire to retain the simplicity of desert and nomadic life and to avoid the luxury of civilization, of which the vine is typical. Samson first comes into contact with the Philistines on the occasion of his marriage with a Philistine woman at Timnath. The Philistines, as before stated, were the descendants of bands of pirates, possibly Cretans, who had ravaged the coasts of Palestine and Egypt and had settled in southern Palestine shortly before the Israelites invaded the country. The fertile plains of the Shephelah were entirely under the control of their confederacy of five cities, Gath, Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, and Ekron, and they had begun to attack the highlands on their northern and eastern frontier. The tribe of Dan, of which Samson was a member, bore the brunt of these attacks and was eventually driven to seek a home elsewhere. Samson's first conflict with the Philistines was the outcome of a private quarrel upon the occasion of his marriage. The

*Num. vi.

fact that his wife was a Philistine shows that Philistines and Israelites were not invariably at war. Samson was injured by his wife's betrayal of his riddle, and when her father gave her to another, he vented his anger by destroying the Philistine crops. His own tribe made no effort to defend him, and the men of Judah surrendered him to the Philistines, who were unable to resist his onslaught. The treachery of Delilah, who persuaded him to disclose the secret of his strength and then betrayed him to his enemies, has become proverbial, while the hero's death amid the destruction of his foes is marked by a certain nobility and grandeur, which the genius of Milton has emphasized in his tragedy, *Samson Agonistes*.

It is impossible to say at what time the attacks of the Philistines drove the Danites to seek a new home in the north. The story of their migration is connected with that of Micah and the Levite, and gives us a glimpse of the religious ideas and social life of the Israelites at that time. Micah lived in an Ephraimite village, and acquired some reputation owing to his possession of an ephod and teraphim through which Jehovah could be consulted, images made from silver which Micah had stolen from his mother. He had atoned for this theft, and, being unable to deal with the increasing numbers of people who came to consult the oracle, he hired a wandering Levite of Bethlehem-Judah to act as the household priest. The Danite spies, in their search for new territory, passed Micah's house and consulted the oracle.

Judges xvii.

The answer induced them to continue their journey northward until they had discovered Laish. They returned and informed their fellow tribesmen that the land of Laish was suitable for the purposes of a new settlement, and six hundred Danites accordingly migrated. As they passed through Ephraim, they robbed Micah of his images and persuaded the Levite to accompany them, by means of the argument that he would occupy a much higher position as priest of a whole tribe than of one household. Micah pursued the robbers, but was obliged to retire before their superior force; the Danites then founded the city of Dan in place of Laish which they conquered, and Micah's Levite, who is said to have been Jonathan, the grandson of Moses, became the priest of the tribal shrine.

The age was one in which there was "no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes". On one occasion, however, a terrible crime roused the nation as a whole to take vengeance. A Levite of Ephraim, with his wife, was benighted on his way home from a visit to his father-in-law in Benjamin, and attempted to find shelter in Gibeah. No one would listen to his requests until an old man took the couple into his house. A band of ruffians then surrounded the house, forced the inmates to surrender the woman, and so ill-treated her that she died. The Levite appealed to the nation for vengeance, and the whole people responded to the call. The tribe of Benjamin

Judges xix.

chose to defend their criminal tribesmen, and twice defeated the attacking host; in the course of a third conflict the Benjamites were ambushed and almost exterminated. The Israelites further punished the Benjamites by refusing to intermarry with them. But they were reluctant to cause the extinction of the tribe, and therefore provided wives for the Benjamites by destroying Jabesh-Gilead, which had declined to join the punitive expedition, and handing the women of the town to the Benjamites. When these proved to be too few, the remaining Benjamites provided themselves with wives by a stratagem which reminds us of the rape of the Sabine women.

There are certain improbabilities in the story; it is hardly likely that the whole of Israel would have combined for any purpose during an age of complete disorganization. But the evils of the time, violence and inhospitality to strangers, civil conflict and robbery, are no less marked than the fact that the national consciousness was beginning to realize the evils of such a state of things.

Ruth i–iv.

In complete contrast with the stories of Micah and of the Benjamites is that of Ruth. The book is of uncertain date: it has even been regarded as a composition belonging to the time of Nehemiah, when the question of intermarriage with foreigners had become a source of bitter strife; the story, long current among the Hebrew traditions, was then reduced to writing in order to show the advantage of mixed marriages. Ruth, the Moabitess, married Boaz, the Israelite,

and from them sprang the house of David; a strict adherence to Nehemiah's principle of racial purity would have caused the history of Israel to run a wholly different course. Whatever the truth may be, the fact remains that the book of Ruth provides us with a beautiful picture of pastoral and domestic life among the Hebrews. The touching story of Ruth's fidelity, the respect shown to her sex, and the kindness of Boaz are evidence that the immorality and brutality of the Danites and Benjamites was not necessarily without exception in the land of Israel.

The book of Judges thus forms a transition period between the first conquest and the monarchy. During that period the Israelites were gradually securing their hold of the country by conquest of the Canaanite inhabitants or by intermarriage with them. The fact that the Israelites were able to survive the transition from a nomadic to a settled life and the contact with a civilization higher than their own, speaks volumes for the closeness of their tribal organization and the strength of their sense of nationalism. We observe the first indication of monarchical feeling in the story of Abimelech; while the claims of Ephraim to the leadership of the northern tribes begin the movement which ended in disruption at the time of Rehoboam.

The great force that enabled the nation to survive the vicissitudes of the age was undoubtedly the national religion, the worship of Jehovah; and yet that worship shows many tendencies to degenera-

tion, as was inevitable in a period of struggle amid surrounding religions often not outwardly dissimilar in character. Jehovah was regarded as a territorial god attached to the soil of the country, and the existence of other gods was recognized. "As for the gods of the heathen, they are but stones, the work of men's hands", was a conception as yet unrealized by the Israelites. In the worship of Jehovah many superstitious practices were customary which were condemned by the greater enlightenment of later ages. The ephod of which we hear in the stories of Gideon and Micah seems to denote an image used in some way as an oracle for discovering the will of Jehovah, as well as the priestly vestment to which we have previously referred. The teraphim were household gods, and disappear from history after the time of David. Worship was conducted in special sanctuaries, which were many: apart from spots hallowed by tradition, such as Bethel and Gilgal, the "high places", the mountain tops were usually chosen. Here coincidence with Canaanite custom is apparent, and the confusion possible between Canaanite Baals and Jehovah was a further source of danger to the purity of the religion.

CHAPTER IX

The Early Monarchy

With the books of Samuel a new period of Hebrew history begins: a monarchy is established which continued to be the constitutional form of government until the two kingdoms were carried into captivity. That such a change was sooner or later inevitable, the tendencies already noted as perceptible in the book of Judges will show. At the same time the early chapters of the books of Samuel display a strong opposition to the idea of a king, and to the misdeeds of later kings are referred many of the calamities that afterwards befell the nation. The monarchy, in short, is regarded from two opposite points of view. One school of thought regarded it as a great advance upon earlier disunion and tribal exclusiveness, and as the only means by which Israel could assert herself as a nation. United action produced national strength and security: when surrounding peoples were conquered and trade routes opened, wealth flowed into the country, while domestic prosperity increased. The splendour of Solomon's reign was the best proof that the change had proved successful. But another view regarded this very success as a great calamity: Israel's purpose in history was not to be a successful nation, but to serve Jehovah, and this purpose could only be hindered or thwarted by political and commercial prosperity. Wealth thus

gained implied the abandonment of that national exclusiveness which was the best preservative of the purity of religious faith; military or commercial treaties with other nations implied the introduction of foreign religions; an alliance of nations included the alliance of their respective gods; while the deadening effects of commercial prosperity upon the spiritual life of the individual were equally disastrous. Thus the principles represented by the king and the prophet are henceforward at variance, and the history of the monarchy can only be understood when it is read in the light of this conflict; otherwise such events as the work of Elijah and Elisha or the revolt of Jehu become unintelligible.

This contradiction is probably responsible also for some of the obvious inconsistencies in the books of Samuel. Samuel is represented, on the one hand, as fiercely opposed to the institution of a king, which he regards as an act of *1 Sam. vii 2–viii 22. treachery and disloyalty to Jehovah. The king is granted by Jehovah as a means of punishing the people for their disloyalty. Elsewhere Saul is chosen by Jehovah for the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, and *1 Sam. ix; x 1–7. Samuel offers no opposition, but anoints him secretly. These versions of the transaction proceed from two separate lines of tradition, one of which regarded the monarchy as disloyal to Jehovah and calamitous to the nation, while the other considered the step as desirable in the interests of national progress and as agreeable to the will of Jehovah. The books of Samuel are

thus a composite document, of which fact further evidence may be seen in the difficulty of harmonizing the accounts of David's early years. The causes, however, which led to the establishment of the monarchy are plain, and, as always, are twofold: the material or remote causes are to be sought in the previous history and the book of Judges; the efficient or immediate cause was the oppression of the Philistines and the necessity for a deliverer.

Religious centres during the period of the Judges were numerous. What period of time separates the age of Samuel from that of Gideon or Jephthah we cannot say; Shiloh, however, apparently became one of the most famous shrines, no doubt because the ark was placed there, apart from the antiquity of the sanctuary. Worshippers came, as they came to Micah's house, to consult the oracle by means of the divine lot, the Urim and Thummim; real religious feeling was often conspicuous by its absence. The priest in charge, Eli, was unable to control his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, whose rapacity and immorality were notorious. Elkanah, an Ephraimite, was accustomed to visit the shrine annually with his wives Peninnah and Hannah: the latter prayed that the reproach of her childlessness might be removed, and vowed to consecrate as a Nazirite a son, if one were granted her. So unusual was the act of fervent and silent prayer, that Eli interpreted the movement of her lips as due to drunkenness. When he was undeceived, Eli gave

1 Sam. i, ii.

Hannah his blessing, and eventually she returned to Shiloh bringing Samuel her first-born. Her psalm of thanksgiving may be compared, both in expression and thought, with the Magnificat. Samuel remained at Shiloh performing the minor duties of the shrine, and was yearly visited by his mother.

The rise of Samuel coincided with the growth of another religious force, of which much will be heard in later years, and to which the religious change which came over the country was probably in large measure due. This force was the influence exerted by the confraternities known in our translations of the Bible as the "schools of the prophets", or the "sons of the prophets". The movement seems to have originated in the mountains of Ephraim. Probably individuals such as "the man of God" who told Eli of the punishment to fall upon his house, were inspired to proclaim the will of Jehovah, and gathered bodies of adherents about them who gradually formed organized communities. The word of the Lord was "precious" (i.e. rare, unusual) in Eli's days, and the "vision" was not "open", i.e. frequent or widespread. The prophetic guilds supplied the want. There were settlements of them at Ramah, Naioth, Bethel, Gilgal, and elsewhere. They seem to have provided a training for religious life, and to have been inspired from time to time by a wild and extraordinary enthusiasm. This is apparently the only point of resemblance between them and the modern Arab Dervishes, with whom they have been some-

what misleadingly compared. To these confraternities may be ascribed the preservation of the national traditions and possibly the beginnings of a national literature. Music was also cultivated among them. Saul was at one time brought under their influence, while Samuel, like Elisha in later times, was clearly a leader among them. His aims were the same as theirs; to bring the people back from the degradation of merely formal and mechanical worship to a sense of Jehovah's nature and of their dependence upon Him.

The doom of Eli was revealed even more clearly by Samuel's vision than by the message of "the man of God". The Philistine wars became the occasion of his overthrow. Israel's most vulnerable point was upon her northern frontier along the plain of Esdraelon, in which the Philistine chariots could manœuvre unchecked. The Philistines were already masters of the Shephelah and of the plain of Sharon. To reach the plain of Esdraelon they must hold a range of low hills separating Sharon from Esdraelon. They therefore made Aphek their base of operations, while the Israelites concentrated at the rock of Ebenezer. After a first defeat, the Israelites determined to ensure victory by sending for the ark, which was brought from Shiloh by Eli's sons. The Philistines were no less dismayed by its arrival than the Israelites were encouraged, but they fought with the valour of despair. The sons of Eli were killed and the ark was captured. When the news reached Shiloh, the aged Eli fell

1 Sam. iii, iv.

from his seat in grief and broke his neck; while the wife of Phinehas died in giving birth to a son whom she named Ichabod, "the glory is departed from Israel".

The Philistines carried the ark to Ashdod and placed it in the temple of Dagon, the fish-god. The overthrow of the god and an outbreak of plague caused the hasty removal of the ark to Gath, which was also smitten. When the other cities refused to receive it, it was sent back to the Israelites in a new cart, together with an offering of golden mice, the symbol of plague. The kine drawing the cart took the road to Bethshemesh without guidance. Sacrifice was there made of the kine; but the people of Bethshemesh who ventured to look into the ark were stricken with plague. The passage which places the number of the dead at an incredible figure is undoubtedly corrupt. The ark was then taken to Kirjath-jearim in Judah, where it remained until David brought it to Jerusalem.

1 Sam. v–vii.

Meanwhile Samuel had assumed his position as the last of the Judges. His work at this time was to rally the people from their great defeat, and this he did by reviving among them the spirit of Jehovah and thus restoring their sense of unity and their confidence. While Ramah, his home, remained his permanent dwelling, he made constant circuits round different centres — Gilgal, Bethel, Mizpeh, and elsewhere, settling disputes and preaching upon such occasions as the great gathering at Mizpeh. "Return to Jehovah" was the burden

of his preaching and of the prophetic guilds who supported him. The Philistines saw their vassals recovering their strength under this new influence and again attacked them, but were defeated at the spot marked by the stone of Ebenezer.

How long Samuel's work continued we do not know. But his restoration of the sense of national unity was answered by the nation with a demand for a king. The efficient or immediate cause of the request was the incompetency and corruption of his sons, who were unable to carry on his work. A further reason was advanced by the people, that they might be like all the nations. The institution of monarchy worked well elsewhere; and now that Israel felt themselves ready to act in concert, why should they not have a king? Samuel sought counsel of Jehovah and was ordered to grant the request, but to explain to the people the burden and the dangers to themselves which a monarchy implied. The reign of Solomon saw his predictions amply fulfilled. At Mizpeh the people assembled; the divine lot fell upon the tribe of Benjamin, and Saul was chosen.

1 Sam. viii–x.

The account of Saul's first meeting with Samuel, when he went to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom, belongs, as has been said, to another line of tradition. It represents Samuel as fully prepared to accept the institution of a king. But the facts are not inconsistent with the account of Saul's institution. Samuel was divinely informed upon whom the sacred lot was to fall; he convinced Saul that his words were true by

giving him three signs which he would encounter upon his homeward journey; while Saul's modesty in hiding when the lots were drawn is natural in view of his foreknowledge of the result.

Saul's election was not accomplished without some opposition. But he was speedily afforded an opportunity of proving his capacity to lead the nation in war, the purpose for which he had been primarily chosen. The Ammonites had made a raid upon eastern Israel and had besieged Jabesh Gilead. The inhabitants proposed to submit, as the price of peace, but the Ammonite king, Nahash, insisted that the terms of a treaty should allow him to put out the right eye of every inhabitant. Possibly he had some personal grudge to satisfy. He allowed the citizens to send across the Jordan for help, feeling confident that none would be forthcoming. The messengers found Saul returning from the field with his team of oxen. When he heard the news he hewed the oxen into pieces and sent them through Israel with the message that if anyone did not follow him, his oxen should be treated in like manner. A large force promptly assembled, and the Ammonites were surprised and routed. Probably it was in gratitude for their deliverance that the men of Jabesh Gilead at a later date recovered the body of Saul after his death; and the account of the manner in which the Benjamites gained their wives leads us to conclude that there was some tie between Saul's tribe and Jabesh Gilead which made him

1 Sam. xi, xii.

*Judges xxi 8–15.

especially anxious to help the citizens of that town.

This exploit established Saul's claim to the throne, precisely as the Judges had gained their temporary powers by some military success. It was perhaps then that Samuel formally resigned his position as the national leader, calling the people to bear witness to his integrity, and earnestly warning them that national obedience to Jehovah was the only condition under which the monarchy could prove a successful experiment. At the same time Samuel relinquished none of his religious functions. If, therefore, the monarchy was to be successful, it was essential that the priest and the king should work together in harmony, and this was the condition to which Saul was unable to conform.

Saul's career is known to us only by isolated scenes. At the time of his election we find him as a young man; the next scene displays him to us as a warrior so far advanced in years as to have a son capable of bearing arms—Jonathan, who became as well known as his father and far more popular. It was in the constantly recurring struggles against the Philistines that Jonathan won his spurs. At some earlier date Saul had garrisoned the posts of Bethel, Michmash, and Gibeah, which commanded the two roads running north and south and into the Jordan valley from the west. Jonathan was not content to remain upon the defensive; he attacked and destroyed a Philistine out-

1 Sam. xiii, xiv.

post at Geba and brought the enemy down upon him in force. The Philistines advanced from the north, and Saul was obliged to abandon Bethel and Michmash. He was able to retain his hold of Geba, which faced Michmash on the southern side of the ravine. His position, however, was difficult. His force was steadily diminished by desertions, while the Philistines were ravaging the country, and the inhabitants had been so disarmed and reduced to such impotence that Saul could expect no help from them. Nor was his confidence increased by the fact that he had suffered a severe rebuke from Samuel at Gilgal, where his impatience and lack of faith had led him to arrogate the priestly functions to himself.

At this juncture Jonathan and his armour-bearer made an attack upon the Philistine camp. A mere reconnoitring expedition became an onslaught, as the omen which Jonathan proposed was favourably answered. The Philistines, a motley host of camp followers and captives as well as warriors, were thrown into one of those panics to which Oriental forces are often subject, and began to melt away in confusion. Saul attempted to consult the divine oracle, but the rout of the Philistines seemed so plain a declaration of the divine will that he abandoned this plan and began the pursuit. His forces were increased as he proceeded by Israelite fugitives who came out of their hiding-places. To ensure that there should be no slackening of the pursuit, Saul invoked a curse upon anyone who should touch food before

the evening. This command was broken in ignorance by Jonathan, and a further sin was committed by the starving pursuers in the evening, who fell upon the oxen and ate their flesh with the blood, which was sacred to Jehovah. Expiation was made and Saul then proposed to continue the pursuit by night. The silence of the oracle showed that someone had sinned, and the national action was suspended until the offender was brought to light. Saul swore that the offender should die, though it were his own son who should be found guilty. The sacred lot fell upon Jonathan, and Saul was ready to perform his vow. Only the interference of the people saved Jonathan's life.

*Cp. Josh. vii.

Saul, as we have seen, had already incurred a rebuke from Samuel for his want of faith. He was now involved in a more serious breach with Jehovah's representative. Samuel commissioned him to attack and destroy the Amalekites, who had opposed Israel's journey towards Canaan. Saul executed this cruel order with certain reservations made in his own interest; he preserved the best of the spoil, and the king, Agag, and excused his action by pleading that the people had kept back certain offerings for Jehovah. Samuel left him with a stern admonition that his disobedience would be punished by rejection, and the prophet's robe was rent as Saul caught hold of it in the vain attempt to renew his plea, an omen that the kingdom was to be torn from him. The command to exterminate the Amalekites and

1 Sam. xv.

*Ex. xvii 8.

Samuel's vengeance upon their king, are characteristic of that fierce and violent age. Saul had shown his inability to lead it; he had been disobedient and had attempted to evade the responsibility for his act. Samuel mourned for him, but would see him no more and was soon bidden to anoint his successor.

This successor was David, the youngest son of Jesse, the grandson of Ruth and Boaz. Jesse, who had eight sons, lived at Bethlehem. The arrival of the prophet to fulfil his mission caused some consternation in the town, possibly because the inhabitants were aware of the breach between Samuel and Saul, and feared that they might be forced to take sides with one or other of the two. Samuel reassured them and made Jesse's family pass before him until he found David, when he anointed him in the midst of his family.

1 Sam. xvi–xviii.

At this point the composite nature of the book becomes strongly apparent, in the several accounts of the manner in which David came under the personal notice of Saul. One account represents David as brought before Saul to soothe his madness by means of his musical skill. Another account relates his slaughter of Goliath, an exploit which induced Saul to give him a post at court. Later we hear that Goliath was slain by another Bethlehemite, Elhanan. The simplest solution is to assume that the mention of Elhanan is a mistake, and to place the events narrated in 1 Sam. xvi 14–23 after

*2 Sam. xxi 19.

chapter xviii. Events then fall into a natural order: the reference to David as a "mighty man of valour" becomes intelligible, and we therefore assume that shortly after David had been anointed a war with the Philistines gave him an opportunity of winning fame by his conflict with Goliath of Gath. The king then took David into his personal retinue, and the immortal friendship with Jonathan began. Saul was then overcome with that mysterious malady, which was increased by his want of faith and produced fits of intense depression. The favourite squire, David, was able to turn his minstrelsy to account in relieving his master's despondency. Continued hostilities with the Philistines enabled David to increase his reputation as a warrior, and the popular applause of his exploits roused suspicion in the gloomy mind of Saul, ever brooding upon Samuel's prophecy, and wondering who was to be his supplanter. He made a murderous attack upon David; again, in a fit of remorse, he offered David his daughter's hand, perhaps with the thought that thus the kingdom would not entirely pass from his own family. In a more confident mood he gave Merab to another, but learned that his younger daughter, Michal, was the bride that David desired. Her affection for David was no less plain, and seeing in this fact a confirmation of his former fears, Saul set David the task of slaying a hundred Philistines in battle. So we may read the dismal alternation of misgiving and hope in Saul's disordered mind. The condition was fulfilled;

*1 Sam. xvi 18.

Michal became David's wife, and Saul then plainly declared his intention of killing David. There was nothing before him but flight.

The compiler has given us two stories of David's flight: Michal secured his escape by letting him down from a window, and deceiving Saul's messengers by placing one of the household gods in the bed of David, who went to visit Samuel at Ramah. Thence he was driven by Saul, who followed his messengers upon their failure to capture David, and was himself again overpowered by the spirit of prophecy. Jonathan is also said to have arranged a plan by which David might learn whether it was safe for him to remain at court. When it became clear that David must flee to save his life, he took a touching farewell of Jonathan.

1 Sam. xix–xxi.

He made his way southwards to Nob, where Abimelech the priest was in charge of the tabernacle. David pretended that he was going on secret service for Saul, and persuaded the priest to give him some of the shewbread and Goliath's sword, a transaction unfortunately witnessed by Doeg, an Edomite and Saul's chief herdsman. David then fled to Gath, intending to appear as a common deserter from the Israelite forces. To take Goliath's sword into his own city was a rash act and David's identity was discovered. He was obliged to pretend madness, and Achish the king contemptuously allowed him to depart.

David now began the life of outlawry which he was to lead until the death of Saul. It proved a

valuable training for future kingship. He learned to handle men; he learned the art of guerrilla warfare; and the task of building up and ruling a small power fitted him for the greater responsibilities which he was afterwards to assume. He became for the time being a second Jephthah, the wilderness of Judah being the area of his operations, and his headquarters the cave of Adullam. Here he was joined by the needy and turbulent, from which mixed material he formed the nucleus of his "mighty men", the bodyguard of his royal state in later years. His family fled to him for protection from Saul, and were placed by David under the protection of the King of Moab. He was also joined by Abiathar, who brought the grievous news that Saul had destroyed the priests of Nob and the whole town on the information of Doeg. Abiathar brought with him the ephod, by which the divine will could be consulted, and David also enjoyed the counsel of the prophet Gad.

1 Sam. xxii–xxvi.

To discover the order of events during the period of David's persecution by Saul is an impossible task. The two stories of David's magnanimous behaviour to Saul probably refer to one and the same event, the slight variations being due to the different lines of tradition from which the compiler took them. While relieving the town of Keilah, near Adullam, from the Philistines, David was obliged to flee from Saul, and escaped to the wilderness of Ziph, south of Hebron. The Ziphites were ready to betray him, and when he had contrived to obtain a final meeting with Jona-

than, he was obliged to retire farther south and only escaped the pursuit owing to the fact that Saul was recalled by a Philistine raid upon his own country. David then made his way to the Dead Sea district, where he spared Saul when he might have killed him. Saul, touched by remorse when David reproached him, went home and abandoned the pursuit.

The incident of Nabal and Abigail shows David in the position of a border chieftain and gives us an insight into the social life of the age. David and his band had protected his own countrymen from the raids of the Bedouin tribes upon the southern frontier, and in accordance with Eastern custom he applied to Nabal for some material recognition of his efforts. Not only had David's band protected Nabal's property, but they had themselves respected his flocks and had refrained from plundering as they might have done. The request was modest, and was preferred at the time of sheep-shearing, an occasion of festivity and hospitality. Moreover, David must often have depended upon such help for food during this period of his wanderings, and such compacts were, and are, of constant occurrence among desert tribes. Nabal's churlish answer roused David to anger; and the tact with which Abigail averted his onslaught may be read in the narrative. Her words show that many regarded David as a possible successor to Saul, in spite of his outlawry. On the sudden death of her husband, Abigail became David's wife; during this period he also

took to wife Ahinoam of Jezreel; Saul had bestowed the hand of Michal elsewhere.

Of this hazardous existence David at length grew weary. There was no prospect of a reconciliation with Saul, and he therefore resolved to enlist in the service of a more powerful chief, who could at least provide him with a settled home. Achish, the King of Gath, accepted his services. He would have liked to keep David in Gath to help him in repelling the incursions of the desert nomads; but David's Israelite band was not likely to act in harmony with the Philistines, their old enemies, and Achish therefore gave him the frontier town of Ziklag. Here he lived as a feudal lord, making raids upon the desert tribes and allowing Achish to believe that the booty thus acquired was taken from the Israelites. Achish was so convinced of his loyalty that he commanded David to join the Philistine forces in a general invasion of Saul's territory. David was saved from the prospect of fighting against his own people by the suspicions of the Philistine nobles, and returned to Ziklag, only to find that the Amalekites whom he had raided, and whom Saul had failed to exterminate, had plundered the town and carried away the women and children, no doubt for sale as slaves in Egypt. David's rapid pursuit was guided by the information received from an exhausted slave whom he found upon the track, and the booty was recovered. David distributed his share among the towns in Judah which were friendly to him and thus paved

1 Sam. xxvii–xxx.

the way for their future acceptance of him as king.

Meanwhile the Philistine army had moved northwards. Unable to force the passes of Benjamin, they advanced to the plain of Esdraelon, where their chariots could manœuvre. Saul took up his position on the slopes of Mount Gilboa. Overcome with depression, his faith degraded to superstition, he made his way to a local necromancer, and through her arts learned the inevitable nature of his doom. In the ensuing battle the Israelites were utterly defeated, Saul's sons, including Jonathan, were slain, and he himself committed suicide. The Philistines stripped the bodies and nailed them to the walls of Bethshan, whence they were rescued by the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, who had not forgotten Saul's first military exploit which had proved their deliverance.

Saul was a brave soldier; but he was unequal to the task of establishing a monarchy, which was admittedly an experiment. He had no spiritual sympathy with the priesthood as representing the real destiny of the chosen people, and he had not the tact to work in harmony with Samuel, or the insight to see that such co-operation was essential to the success of the monarchy. Nor did he appreciate the value of royal state and court splendour as a means of impressing his people with his position. His government was not centralized, and he had little hold over the outlying portions of his territory. The tragical nature of his downfall is increased by the gloom and depression which over-

spread his character and accelerated his overthrow. It remained for David to rebuild the kingdom from the ruins which Saul had left behind him.

CHAPTER X

The Reign of David

The Israelites were left in a desperate position upon the death of Saul. Their king was dead, their army scattered, and the land lay helpless at the feet of the Philistines. It seemed as though the country was about to relapse into the anarchy which had characterized the age of the Judges. The chieftains of the southern towns had been already approached by David, and they now realized that he was their only hope. Apart from his natural gifts and the compact and well-trained force at his command, political circumstances seemed to favour his ambitions. As a Philistine vassal, he could establish himself in the south of Israel and gradually consolidate his power without at once arousing the suspicions of his overlords. It was David's policy, therefore, to proceed quietly and diplomatically until he felt able to throw off the mask and declare himself independent of Philistia. At the present moment his great advantage consisted in the fact that he was the only Israelite whom the Philistines

2 Sam. i–iii.

would permit to begin the work of reconstructing a kingdom upon the ruins that Saul had left behind.

Saul's death was announced to David by an Amalekite, who claimed himself to have slain Jehovah's anointed, and received death as the reward of his deceit. The famous elegy, known as the "Bow Song", preserved for the compiler in the Book of Jasher was then uttered by David. He was then confronted by opposition in the north from the remnants of Saul's house. Abner, Saul's general and cousin, who had escaped from the battle of Mount Gilboa, placed Ishbosheth or Eshbaal, Saul's last son, upon the throne at Mahanaim: the Philistines probably tolerated his existence as a tributary vassal to themselves. Meanwhile David had established himself at Hebron, and for seven years the two parties strove to make their positions secure, until the encounter at Gibeon took place. David's forces were led by his nephews, the sons of Zeruiah, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel: the two first named became important figures in the course of later events. After a conflict between twelve picked warriors on either side a general engagement began, in which David's troops were victorious, though Asahel was killed by Abner during the pursuit. Ishbosheth then quarrelled with Abner, who had taken to himself one of Saul's concubines, Rizpah, a proceeding interpreted in the East as tantamount to a declaration of designs upon the throne. Abner therefore changed sides, and began to make overtures to David; possibly he had realized that the struggle

was hopeless, and that David had the better chance of ultimate success. David returned a ready response; he was glad to have the support of a capable leader and an influential man, and the only stipulation he made was that his former wife Michal, Saul's daughter, should be returned to him. Apart from his old love for her, he may have felt that she would strengthen his claim to Saul's throne. Michal was brought to David, followed by her weeping husband, and Abner was entertained at court. No sooner had he gone away than Joab returned from an expedition, and on hearing an account of David's intentions, reproached him and recalled Abner by a false pretext. He then treacherously murdered him, to avenge the death of his brother Asahel. Abner must have known the danger to which he was exposed by the blood feud, and it is strange that he should have taken no greater precautions. David invoked curses upon Joab and his family, and gave Abner a public funeral. But he did not attempt to punish the murderers; he felt that Joab's help was indispensable, and Joab was no doubt supported by popular views upon the morality of the blood feud.

Ishbosheth's power disappeared with Abner's death, and two Benjamites anticipated the inevitable by murdering him and taking his head to David. They were punished as the Amalekite had been after the battle of Mount Gilboa. The only remaining descendant of Saul, Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, was a cripple who had been lamed by a fall from the arms of his

2 Sam. iv–v.

nurse as she fled after the battle of Mount Gilboa. The sons of Rizpah and Merab, of whom we hear later, were not of pure blood and could not claim to succeed Saul. David afterwards showed every kindness to Mephibosheth and his servant, Ziba. Meanwhile the northern chieftains recognized that they could not continue the struggle against David, and felt that their best policy was to join him and make common cause against the Philistines. They therefore gave in their allegiance to David, who thus became king of all Israel.

*2 Sam. ix 11.

At the same time David was also nominally a Philistine vassal. The Philistines were quite content to see the Israelites exhaust their powers in civil war, but could only regard David as a dangerous enemy the moment he had succeeded in uniting the whole country under his leadership. The many scattered notices of the struggle can with difficulty be combined into a consistent narrative. At first the Philistines seem to have driven David into the hills, and forced him to return to his old refuge, the cave of Adullam. To this period belong the exploits of individual heroes and the famous draught of water from the well of Bethlehem. The turning-point of the war was the capture of Jerusalem, which gave David a secure base of operations. The inhabitants had such confidence in the strength of this natural stronghold that they manned the walls with their lame and blind in mockery of David's efforts. David spared the inhabitants, and the position of

*2 Sam. xxiii.

Araunah in later years seems to show that he left them in possession of their property. The final conflict with the Philistines took place in the valley of Rephaim, on the highway from Hebron to Shechem. The issue of the first battle was not conclusive; but in the second the Philistines were defeated, and driven in rout to Gezer. The capture of Methegammah completed their overthrow.

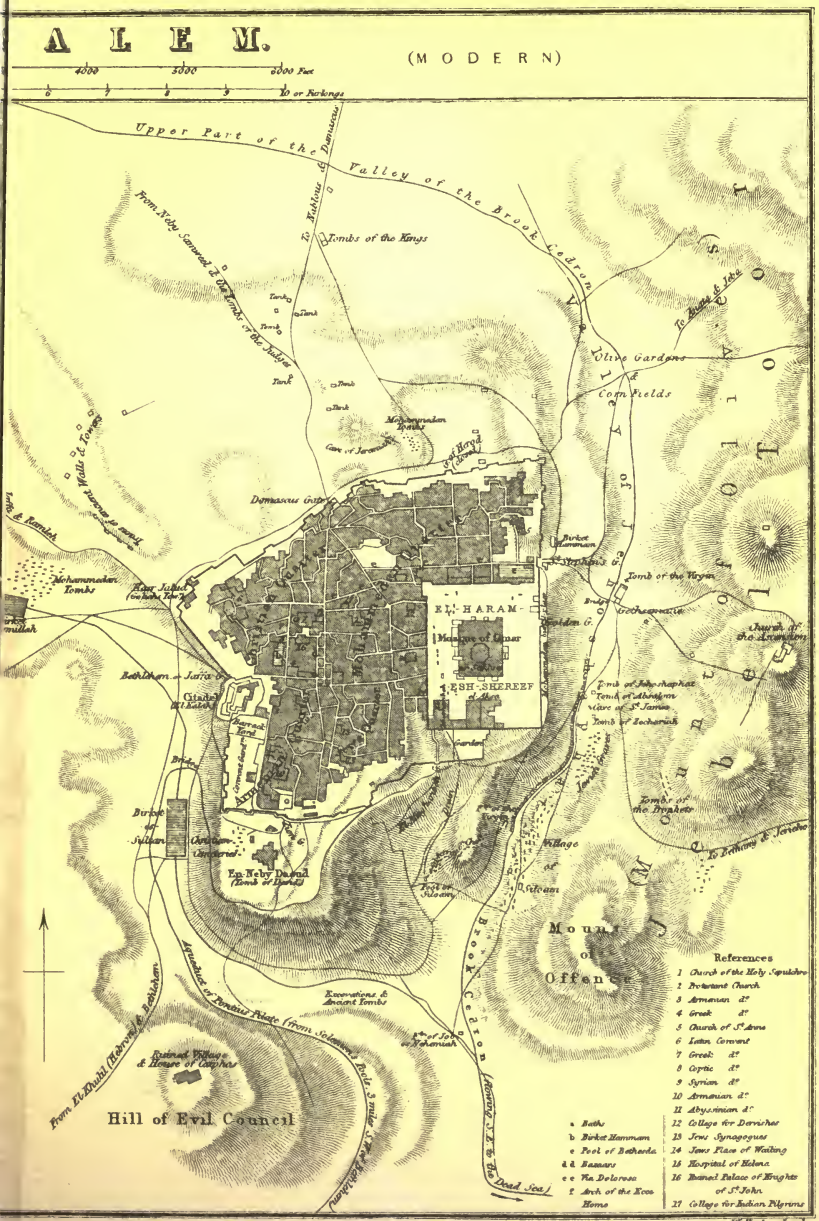
*2 Sam. viii 1.

David had thus defeated the long-standing enemies of his nation, and his authority over the several tribes of Israel was now undisputed. His next task was to consolidate his kingdom, and to secure the frontiers from attack. The work of internal consolidation must have been a slow and difficult process. Ephraim had always claimed to lead the tribes; Benjamin was suffering from a sense of leadership lost with the death of Saul, and the seven years' war with the house of Saul must have left many a breach which only time could heal. Under these circumstances the choice of Jerusalem as the new centre of the country was an admirable stroke of policy. As the site had recently been in the hands of an alien race, no local jealousies for the claims of other sites would be aroused by this selection. The situation of the town was such that it could command the routes from north to south, and from Joppa to Jericho; from a military point of view, no more defensible centre could be found. History has abundantly justified David's determination; and the rock of Zion became for the chosen

2 Sam. vi–vii.

The site of Golgotha is unknown, but it has been generally regarded as the place where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre now stands.
The supposed course of the line of circumvallation, drawn by Titus round Jerusalem, is shown thus — — —

Nothing is known of the interior aspect of ancient Jerusalem, but it may be gathered from various passages in the Bible & from a few statements in the writings of Josephus, that the Royal Palace, as well as the Armoury & Prison were situated in the Upper City. The Markets for timber, cloth, & wool, appear to have been in the Lower City. The positions of most of the Gates are uncertain.


ALEM.
(MODERN)
4000
5000
6000 Feet
10 or Furlongs
Upper Part of the Valley of the Brook Cedron
To Bethany & Jericho
Tombs of the Kings
Olive Gardens & Corn Fields
Mohammedan Tombs
Tomb of the Virgin
Church of the Ascension
Tomb of Jehoshaphat
Tomb of Absalom
Tomb of Zacharias
Tomb of the Prophets
Village of Siloam
Mount of Offence
Excavations & Ancient Tombs
Aqueduct of Pontius Pilate (from Solomon's Pools 3 mile S. of Bethlehem)
Ruined Village & House of Caiaphas
Hill of Evil Council
From El-Dhahi (Hebron) & Bethlehem
Mohammedan Tombs
Bethlehem or Jaffa Gate
Citadel
Burial Place of Sultan
Ez-Neby Dawd (Tomb of David)
Pool of Bethesda
Pool of Siloam
Valley of Jehoshaphat
Valley of Hinnom
Valley of Rephaim
Valley of Kidron
Valley of Jordan
Valley of Jordan
Valley of Jordan

people the centre of their hopes and the sanctuary of their God.

David was well aware that the strongest influence that made for unity among the Israelites was their religion. He had no intention or ambition to centralize religion in Jerusalem; this attempt was reserved for the days of Hezekiah, and the country as yet was far from ripe for such a change; local sanctuaries were, and remained, numerous. But David resolved to make Jerusalem the chief religious centre by removing the ark to his new capital. The ark had remained at Kirjath-Jearim since the time when the Philistines had sent it back. David now removed it to Jerusalem with due solemnity. The death of Uzzah during the march caused the king to deposit the ark for three months in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite; the blessings which its presence brought to the household were taken as an omen that the original intention might be completed, and the ark was finally brought triumphantly into the city, carried by bearers, and not, as before, placed upon a cart, that no second accident might check its progress. David's participation in the rejoicings led to a quarrel between himself and his wife Michal. It is possible that she shared the feelings with which her former husband left her, and took this opportunity of venting her bitterness upon David. The chief priests of the new shrine were naturally Abiathar and his son Abimelech, who had accompanied David, and carried the ephod during the period of wandering and out-

*2 Sam. viii 17.

lawry. Zadok, the former priest of the old shrine at Gibeon, was associated with them. The king himself exercised priestly functions upon occasion. Prophets or seers were also about his person: Gad had accompanied his wanderings; to Nathan he listened obediently when he was told that his desire to build a permanent temple was premature. There was still warfare to be waged upon his frontiers, and the surrounding tribes must be reduced to subjection before the works of peace could be begun. David recognized the justice of these monitions; for he had realized, as Saul never could, that the secular and the religious powers of the kingdom must work in harmony if the nation was ever to rise to greatness.

The history of these wars is by no means clear. From such notices as are preserved to us, it seems that David first attacked the Moabites, who were reduced to impotence by a cruel massacre. It was in the care of the king of Moab that David left his parents when he was an outlaw, but what reasons provoked his attack at this time we do not know. As so often, the pressure of a common danger seems to have induced a general coalition of the tribes upon the southern and eastern frontiers of Israel. The Ammonite king, Hanun, invited an attack by insulting David's embassy of condolence, sent to Hanun on his father's death. The Ammonites also called up their Syrian confederates, and Joab found himself confronted by two armies when he advanced to the attack. He ordered his brother Abishai to

2 Sam. viii 1–14; x–xii.

*1 Sam. xxii.

oppose the Ammonites, while he himself turned upon the Syrians. The brothers won a complete victory, but in the following year the Syrians under Hadarezer or Hadadezer, King of Zobah, prepared to renew the conflict. The occasion was one of critical importance; David himself took the field and gained a complete victory. Leaving Joab to continue the siege of Rabbah, the capital town of Ammon, David returned to Jerusalem. The confederacy was broken up, and the tribal chiefs gave in their submission. Rabbah was soon reduced; David, summoned by Joab to secure the credit of the capture, led the final assault in person. The Ammonites, who had given special provocation, were put to hard labour, whereas other tribes were only compelled to pay tribute; we afterwards read that Nahash of Ammon helped David during Absalom's revolt, and we may assume that Nahash was the governor appointed by David to rule the district in place of Hanun. Edom was also subdued by severe measures, and Joab spent six months in the valleys hunting down the inhabitants. The general result of these wars was to secure the supremacy of David in western Syria; his power was recognized by Toi, King of Hamath, and by the King of Tyre.

*2 Sam. xvii 27.

1 Kings xi 15.

It was while Joab was besieging Rabbah that David, who was then staying at Jerusalem, committed his sin with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, a story so well known that it need not be repeated here. The greatness of the king's crime

was equalled by the nobility of his repentance, and the story shows that the secret of David's success was to be found in the innate honesty of his character; this and his belief in Jehovah forbade him to resent the rebuke of the prophet, and he thus avoided the estrangement from the religious powers into which a lesser man might then have been led.

Saul had shown little desire for royal state, and little capacity for organization. David, however, laid the foundations of a well-centralized military and civil organization at his court. David himself was accessible to the people, and acted as chief justice, as we see in the story of the woman of Tekoah. As the population increased, it is likely enough that the administration of justice required reorganization, and Absalom's complaints may have been based upon some substratum of truth. We now first hear of an officer, the "recorder", who performed the functions of the Grand Vizier of the Caliphate, and kept the king informed of public affairs. There was also an overseer of forced labour or levies and of taxation, and a scribe who seems to have been a Secretary of State. These officials were no doubt assisted by subordinates. Other trusted advisers at court were known as the king's friends, and perhaps formed a council of state. The commander-in-chief of the army, in the king's absence, was Joab. We also hear that Benaiah was in command of the royal bodyguard, the Cherethites and Pelethites, a foreign mercenary force, recruited from Philistines of Cretan origin.

2 Sam. viii 15-18; xx 23-26.

*1 Chron. xxvii 33.

The Gibborim or mighty men, the force that David gathered round him in the wilderness, formed the nucleus of the bodyguard. Of the priests and prophets we have spoken. The monarchy, both in theory and practice, was absolute, and David was commander-in-chief, chief justice, and the religious head of the nation.

Like all Oriental monarchs, David possessed a harem, and palace intrigues, together with his own favouritism of particular sons, were responsible for most of the troubles of his declining years. Apart from Michal, we hear that he had six wives before he made Jerusalem his capital. No doubt he took others in the course of alliance with foreign kings, as a marriage was a regular means of cementing such compacts. Absalom's mother was a princess of Geshur, perhaps in Philistia.

Two great calamities afflicted the kingdom during David's reign. No indication is given as to the time of their occurrence, and it will be convenient to consider them here. The first was a three years' famine, and when David enquired the cause of the oracle of Jehovah he was told that the guilt of Saul in slaying the Gibeonites was as yet unexpiated. These were the Canaanite tribe who had tricked Joshua into an alliance; when and under what circumstances Saul attacked them is unknown. Blood could only be expiated by blood, and the Gibeonites agreed to accept seven of Saul's descendants in payment of the debt. Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, was spared, but the two sons of Rizpah and the

2 Sam. xxi 1-14; xxiv.

*Josh. ix.

five sons of Michal were surrendered. Whether David's feelings for Michal in any way dictated his choice we cannot say; possibly Michal is a mistake for Merab; his solicitude for Mephibosheth was due to his covenant with Jonathan. The bodies of the sufferers were watched with tender devotion by Rizpah, until the fall of the rain showed that the divine anger was appeased. David then rewarded her devotion by giving the remains honourable burial together with the bones of Saul and Jonathan.

The pestilence that ravaged the nation as a punishment for David's attempt to make a census of the people illustrates, no less than the account of the Gibeonite demands, the religious theories of the age. David may well have desired in the course of his wars to know upon what resources he could count. But primitive religions constantly regard the extent of population as one of the matters which are the business of heaven rather than of man, and David's action was thus an attempt to pry into the mysterious and was the outcome of want of faith in Jehovah. Sinful pride in his power or "militarism" may have been motives, but are not revealed by our text. The statement that the "anger of the Lord" against Israel was the motive cause of David's sin is to be compared with the case of Pharaoh. The mention of Araunah or Ornan shows that the Jebusite population had not been entirely destroyed at the capture of Jerusalem, and was allowed to retain land in its possession. The Chronicler identifies the site of the future

*1 Chron. xxii.

temple with the spot where David erected the altar when the plague was stayed.

The chief event of David's domestic life was Absalom's revolt, which is described for us in great detail. The profound grief and anxiety under which David suffered in consequence of this attempt were the inevitable results of harem intrigue and parental weakness; but the revolt also revealed a disunion and discontent which David can hardly have suspected, and at one point proved very nearly successful. David's eldest son, Amnon, gave way to a mad passion for his half-sister, Tamar, and dishonoured her. She then fled to her own brother Absalom for refuge; Absalom nursed his revenge for two years, and finally killed Amnon at a shearing feast. He then went into exile for three years at the court of his grandfather, Talmai, the King of Geshur. Joab, through the mouth of a "wise woman" of Tekoah, persuaded the king to allow Absalom to return. David refused to see his son in his presence for two years more, until Joab's intervention procured a final reconciliation. David's deep affection for Absalom probably conflicted with his sense of duty and justice. Joab's motives are more difficult to fathom; he was thoroughly loyal to David, and he may have made such efforts to restore the son whom he afterwards slew as a rebel, because he saw David was brooding over his loss, and that a continued breach between Absalom and David would facilitate preparations for the revolt which afterwards occurred.

2 Sam. xiii–xviii.

If this was Joab's reason, he had divined correctly. Absalom had been doubtless meditating rebellion, and no sooner was he reconciled to his father than he began to form a party of supporters among the people. His personal appearance was most attractive, and no doubt popular sentiment was on his side; his murder of Amnon would have seemed justifiable to the people and his punishment unduly harsh. He maintained a show of princely state to impress the people, was affable and accessible rather than dignified and exclusive, and sympathized with the inadequate arrangements for the administration of justice. It is likely enough that there was some truth in these complaints; the number of the population was increasing, and earlier judicial arrangements required reorganization. But the grievance is a stock one, and was one of the pleas for the introduction of the monarchy. Under pretext of performing a vow, he obtained David's permission to go to Hebron, and there he raised the standard of revolt. The centre was well chosen: Hebron and Judah were indignant because the capital had been transferred to Jerusalem; Benjamin was angry because it had lost the prestige of providing the throne with a king. The widespread disaffection in other parts was the natural result of the stronger measures and more centralized government necessary to secure the unity of the kingdom.

*1 Sam. viii 3.

David was informed of the strength of the movement and saw that flight was the only resource. He must pass the Jordan and take refuge in the

land of Gilead. At the brook Kidron, as he left Jerusalem, he offered to dismiss his guard of "mighty men", but they refused to leave his service. The ark and its bearers were prepared to follow him into exile, but David sent them back to Jerusalem, with instructions to keep him informed of the course of events. As he ascended Mount Olivet, he was informed of the defection of his chief counsellor, Ahitophel the Gilonite; at the high place upon the summit he met the "king's friend", one of his trusted advisers, Hushai the Archite, and sent him back to Jerusalem to thwart the wisdom of Ahitophel. Then came an encounter with two men of Benjamin: Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, came with a present and a false declaration of his master's disloyalty; Shimei uttered the feelings of his tribe towards David, who would not allow his followers to avenge the insults.

Meanwhile Absalom had entered Jerusalem; under the advice of Ahitophel he seized his father's harem and so made the breach irreparable. Ahitophel also advised immediate pursuit of David with a picked force; but when Hushai reminded the council of David's military prowess and of the fact that his formidable bodyguard had remained loyal, Absalom determined to wait until an overwhelming force could be collected. This news was carried to David by Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the sons of the priests Zadok and Abiathar; they escaped pursuit by hiding, and informed David that he would have time to gather an opposition force. Ahitophel saw that Absalom's prospects were ruined by the refusal

to take immediate action, and went home and hanged himself—the first case of suicide known to us in the Bible.

David had taken refuge in Mahanaim: the Gileadites and the chieftains of the neighbouring tribes remained loyal and brought in supplies; foremost among them was Barzillai. By degrees a large force of Israelites gathered for the final struggle, and were placed by Absalom under the command of his cousin Amasa. Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gittite commanded David's forces in three divisions: David was persuaded against his will to await the issue of the battle in Mahanaim. The conflict took place in a thick forest, where Absalom's superiority in numbers was neutralized by the difficulty of the ground. Absalom himself was entangled in the branches of an oak tree; Joab paid no attention to the king's command to "deal gently with the young man"; he knew that the rebellion would only be crushed when its leader was slain. Absalom was buried in a pit in the forest, far from the magnificent tomb which he had reared for himself, and the rebellion was practically at an end.

David's grief for the death of Absalom had become depression and inactivity. Joab roused him to pursue his advantage and not to allow the forces of disaffection to recover themselves. A reaction of feeling began in David's favour; the people remembered his past services to the nation; the real centre of the rebellion had been the south, and the north now

2 Sam. xix-xx 22.

returned to its allegiance. Judah alone hung back; David sent a message to this tribe through the priests Zadok and Abiathar and also announced that he had made Amasa commander-in-chief in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of David's sister, Abigail, and the change was both a concession to popular feeling and a punishment to Joab for his slaughter of Absalom in defiance of David's orders. The return of David reversed the incidents of his flight. Shimei came to beg for pardon, which was granted against the wish of the sons of Zeruiah. The grandson of Saul, Mephibosheth, appeared in person to expose the false charge of disloyalty preferred by Ziba and was restored to favour. David's chief supporter in Gilead, Barzillai, accompanied him to the fords of the Jordan, declined an invitation to court in view of his age, and asked that the king's favour might be bestowed upon his son Chimham.

On the west bank of Jordan a fierce quarrel broke out; the northern tribes were jealous because Judah had been chosen to escort the king, and accused the royal tribe of attempts to monopolize the king's person. A Benjamite, Sheba, seized the opportunity once more to raise the signal for revolt, in the hope of recovering the pre-eminence for his own tribe, and a dangerous rising took place. David commissioned Amasa to crush the movement, but his dilatory methods proved ineffectual, and Joab and Abishai were therefore dispatched with the royal bodyguard. Joab treacherously killed Amasa at Gideon, as he had killed Abner,

and suppressed the revolt. Sheba fled northwards to Abel, now a town of Dan, and Joab laid siege to the place; the inhabitants, on the advice of a wise woman, secured their immunity by throwing Sheba's head over the wall, and Joab returned to Jerusalem.

David's closing years may well have been occupied, as the Chronicler states, in gathering materials for the temple which his son was to build. They were also disturbed by the palace intrigues to which Oriental kings are constantly exposed, and which are the inevitable outcome of polygamy. In this case the succession was in dispute. David had made no public announcement upon this point; he was old and feeble, and entirely under the influence of Bathsheba. Bathsheba was by no means so crafty an intriguer as she has been represented to be. Her want of foresight is shown by her failure to anticipate Adonijah's pretensions, and her want of tact by the request which she afterwards made to Solomon on Adonijah's behalf. She owed her influence to her beauty, and she was determined to set Solomon her son upon the throne. Adonijah, the son of Haggith, was the elder, and naturally thought his claims superior. As David became feeble, he was left to the care of Abishag, a young Shunamite, and Adonijah began to assume royal state. He was supported by Joab and Abiathar, who had always been loyal to David, and doubtless considered that they were now acting in his interests. Bathsheba and Solomon were supported by Zadok, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the

1 Kings i.

*1 Kings ii 19.

captain of tne guard, priests and generals thus taking opposite sides. The crisis came when Adonijah invited his supporters to a sacrificial feast near Enrogel, hard by Jerusalem on the east. The festival was regarded both by Adonijah's friends and by his enemies as a coronation celebration. Nathan took the alarm and sent Bathsheba to David; she reminded him of his promise —obviously a private one—to secure the kingdom for her son. At David's command, a counter celebration was held at Gihon, half a mile distant from Adonijah's feast, and Solomon was anointed king by Zadok. The popular rejoicings reached the ears of Adonijah, and a messenger informed him that Solomon had been duly enthroned. Adonijah recognized his danger, for the royal bodyguard was supporting his rival; he therefore took sanctuary at the altar, and was allowed to go in peace when he had acknowledged Solomon's supremacy. He was not an open rebel, as Absalom had been, but was merely anxious to secure the succession, which he thought, in the absence of any public announcement by David, was naturally his.

Soon after Solomon's coronation David felt that his death was approaching. In the manner of the patriarchs, he delivered his last charge to his son, and warned him that loyalty to Jehovah was the only guarantee for the safety of his kingdom. He also advised Solomon to rid himself of Joab and Shimei; the former for his treacherous murder, the latter for his disloyalty. Many have regarded this passage as a later inter-

1 Kings ii 1–11.

polation: its moral content, however, is in full keeping with the rude morality of the age and with the inconsistencies of David's character. These were of the kind common to Oriental despots: David was cunning, cruel, and sensual at times. But his character was essentially noble, and his personal charm and attractiveness undoubted; indeed, his powers of personal influence largely contributed to his success. The devotion with which the rough and lawless adherents of his period of outlawry clung to him is clear proof of the fact. He had tact, as may be seen from his behaviour at Saul's court; he was magnanimous; he spared Saul and Shimei when they were in his power; he never forgot his friendship with Jonathan; he refused the water for which his soldiers risked their lives. Hence we cannot be surprised that he was popular.

He was also a great soldier and statesman. To establish a united Israel upon the wreck and desolation which Saul left behind was no mean achievement; but David further established a dynasty which endured for four centuries, and founded a capital which has remained a capital to the present day. His poetical powers stamped his name upon the collection of national Hebrew poetry known as the Book of the Psalms. Finally, he had a profound belief in his God. His repentance was no less deep than his sin. He was able to work in agreement with the priests and prophets of his time, and so to make Jerusalem the centre of a religion whose future developments surpassed his wildest hopes and dreams.

CHAPTER XI

The Reign of Solomon

Solomon soon found occasion to rid himself of Adonijah and his supporters, and his rival it was who presented him with the opportunity. Adonijah asked Bathsheba, whose influence as the royal mother was great, to approach Solomon with a request that Abishag, David's concubine, might be given him as his wife. Solomon at once, and not unnaturally, in view of Eastern custom, interpreted this request as the outcome of a fresh claim to the throne. He immediately sent Benaiah to kill Adonijah. Abiathar the priest was sent into banishment to Anathoth, a Levite village, of which we shall hear again in connection with Jeremiah. Joab fled for refuge to the altar, where Benaiah slew him on his refusal to leave the sanctuary. Shimei was spared, but was ordered to remain within the walls of Jerusalem; an apparently unintentional transgression of this command provided an excuse for his execution, and Solomon was then in secure possession of his throne. Of the opposition Joab was undoubtedly the most dangerous member. Cruel, treacherous, and unscrupulous to a degree, his loyalty to David had none the less been conspicuous. He was the most distinguished soldier in the kingdom, and his power of instant decision and his grasp of a situation had often proved invaluable to David, as was seen at the

1 Kings ii 12–46.

*2 Sam. xvi 21.

close of Absalom's revolt. For what reason he declined to support Solomon we do not know.

Solomon "in all his glory" is a more impressive, but a far less human figure than David. We see little or nothing of Solomon's personal life, except at the very beginning of his reign. His dream, his request to Jehovah, his judgment of a difficult case, in which his methods were typical of Eastern courts, are almost the only instances in which the king's personality comes directly before us. His reign was a period of peace and of increased national wealth. Israel came into direct contact with the civilizations of Phœnicia and Egypt, and both learned the achievements and also began to contract the vices of advanced civilization. Solomon's wealth and wisdom were proverbial, and his personality became the centre of a large number of Arabian legends and demonologies. As to his wisdom, Solomon was doubtless a contributor to the proverbial lore of the nation, and the book of Proverbs was assigned to him for the same reason as the book of Psalms was assigned to David. Trite sayings, concentrating the experience of life as seen in the light of common sense, are to be found among all nations, and were especially attractive to Arab peoples. The Song of Songs is a love poem, remarkable for its imagery drawn from the beauties of nature. The book of Ecclesiastes was certainly not written by Solomon. Most critics place it as late as 250 B.C. The pessimism by which it is pervaded, the cry of a sated soul who has lived life and found life vain,

1 Kings iii.

is presented as the attitude of Solomon at the close of his reign; but the book is saturated with Greek thought and expression. Pessimism is not usually the *cri de cœur* of a young and rising nation.

Solomon's more extended interests caused him to add to David's organization of the court for purposes of administration. Besides David's officers Solomon had a steward or major-domo of the palace and a chief officer over the provincial governors. These governors were called into existence by the greatest innovation of Solomon's reign. The kingdom was divided into twelve districts, each of which was to supply the palace with food for one week in the year. Judah was apparently exempted from this obligation, and the twelve districts were thus not conterminous with the twelve tribes. It is possible that Solomon, by this new system of division, was attempting to break down the tribal exclusiveness which was based in part upon local associations, although the tribal boundaries must have been very indefinite lines of demarcation in many cases. It is extremely probable that the exemption of Judah stimulated the old opposition between Judah and the northern provinces led by Ephraim, which came to a head at the outset of the next reign. Probably also the mode of levying the taxation thus imposed provided little check upon rapacious and extortionate officials.

1 Kings iv, vii, ix, x.

Even more unpopular was the system of forced service. Samuel's predictions upon the burdens

that monarchy would bring, now found their fulfilment. Solomon, like other Eastern monarchs, acted on the theory that his subjects were his servants or his slaves. Great numbers of Israelite workmen, together with some Phœnician artisans, were employed in the quarries in Judah and Lebanon, and upon the many building works which Solomon undertook. Apart from the Temple and other works at Jerusalem, Solomon also fortified a number of cities for the defence of his frontiers, and to serve as arsenals or stores. The supply of labour for these tasks was under the general supervision of Adoniram or Adoram. These works could be justified upon the ground of necessity. Their value was proved by the fact that during Solomon's reign the kingdom was undisturbed by war at home, although certain frontier conquests were lost. On the other hand, Solomon was attracted by outward show and brilliant display. He wished to rival the magnificence of other Eastern rulers, and the wealth that came into the country was expended upon golden shields for his bodyguard, court decorations, a wonderful throne, and a large harem.

*1 Sam. viii 13.

*1 Kings ix 15–19.

This wealth was partly gained by means of closer diplomatic and commercial relations with Egypt and Phœnicia. The daughter of the Pharaoh became one of his wives, and brought as her dowry the town of Gezer, a valuable fortress commanding the route from Philistia to the hills of Judah. The alliance with Hiram of Tyre was actuated by the desire to obtain material for

Josh. xvi 10.
Judg. i 29.

building and a supply of skilled workmen. Rafts of cedar and timber from Lebanon were floated down the coast to Joppa, and Tyre received the products of Palestine in exchange—corn and oil. In return for 120 talents of gold to finance his undertakings, Solomon ceded to Hiram a number of cities on his northern frontier, with which Hiram was not entirely satisfied. But the chief gain to Israel from the Phœnician alliance was a knowledge of commercial method and an ambition to succeed in trade, which never entirely left the chosen people. From Ezion-geber, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, Solomon sent ships under Phœnician sailors with his own servants to trade down the Red Sea coasts with Arabia. Probably some trade with India was also carried on. As gold was found in Arabia, it is not necessary to suppose that Solomon drew his supplies from South Africa. The "navy of Tarshish" is a generic name, as we might say a "navy of East Indiamen", and we must not infer that Solomon traded directly with Tartessus in southern Spain. Southern Arabia was probably the home of the Queen of Sheba, whose visit was the outcome of commercial relations with that country. Solomon also imported horses, partly for his own use and partly for exportation. The configuration of Palestine and the rocky nature of the ground had prevented any general use of cavalry or chariots by the Israelites, in an age when horses were not shod. David hamstrung most of the horses that he captured,

*1 Kings ix 11.

*1 Kings x 22.

*Is. v 28.
2 Sam. viii 4
Deut. xvii 16.
Is. xxxi 1

reserving only a few for show. There was also an idea that the use of horses was contrary to the will of Jehovah—"trust in horses" is opposed to "trust in Jehovah". Solomon now imported horses in considerable numbers from Musri or North Syria, and Kue or Cilicia. He may have exported horses to Egypt, which drew most of its supply from Syria. A further and important source of income was found in the tolls and customs duties paid by merchants bringing goods into or through the country. The fortresses which Solomon built—Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Lower Beth-horon, and others—were intended for the purpose of levying these dues as well as for defence. Megiddo and Gezer, for instance, commanded the chief trade route between Damascus and Egypt.

*1 Kings x 15.

*Ezra iv 13, 20.

Solomon's chief claim to fame is the fact that he was the builder of the first temple. The descriptions preserved to us do not enable us to reconstruct the temple in full detail, but the general scheme is clear. The site was the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, occupied by David's altar, which was erected upon the cessation of the great plague. This was upon the Hill of Ophel, where the palace also stood at a somewhat lower elevation. When the work was finished the Temple appeared as part of a group of buildings running from south to north in the following order: the House of the Forest of Lebanon, the Hall of Pillars, the Throne Hall, the Palace with the House of Pharaoh's Daughter, and the Temple:

1 Kings vi, vii.

John Bartholomew & Co., Edinr.

all of these were surrounded by a succession of outer courts. The actual Temple was of small size, but was intended as the house of Jehovah, and not as a meeting-place for His worshippers, who assembled in the court before the Temple, which contained the altar of burnt offerings. The Temple itself was about 124 feet long by 55 feet broad and over 52 feet high;[1] it lay east and west, with a porch or propylæum on the east side; on the other sides three stories of side chambers were built into it to a height of 17 feet. The interior was divided into two parts—the Holy Place, nearly 70 feet long by 34½ feet broad and 52 feet high; and the Holy of Holies, a cube of 34½ feet.[1] This chamber, which contained the ark, was unlighted by windows. The Holy Place was lighted by small windows high above the side chambers; here were the table of shewbread and candlesticks. The house was panelled with cedar-wood, richly carved, and in part overlaid with gold. No tool was used in the sacred spot; the materials were prepared elsewhere and afterwards fitted together. Before the porch stood two bronze pillars, Jachin on the right and Boaz on the left: these were to be found in many Semitic sanctuaries. The Temple was surrounded by a court, the widest space in which lay open upon the eastern front. Here was the altar of burnt offering, and between this and the T mple was the bronze sea or laver, a large vessel supported by twelve bronze bulls, which faced the four quarters of the compass in

[1] These are the figures given bv G. A. Smith: *Jerusalem*, vol. ii, p. 63.

threes. The Temple was connected with the royal buildings above mentioned, which were immediately adjacent upon a lower terrace and were also surrounded by courts.

The building of the Temple is said to have occupied seven years. In the eighth year the Feast of Tabernacles was chosen for the dedication and its duration was extended to fourteen days. Two processions went up to the Temple, the royal and civil dignitaries from the palace and the priests bearing the ark from Zion. In the court the ark was opened, and the tables of the law were found in it; it was then placed in the Holy of Holies, and the bearers' staves were taken away, as it had now reached its final resting-place. The king then offered prayer in the court before and for the people, and concluded the ceremony with sacrifice. The sight of the cloud upon the Temple, of the magnificent buildings unknown hitherto in the history of Israel, of the solemn worship and sacrifice, made a profound impression upon the people and fitly inaugurated a new chapter in the religious life of the nation.

1 Kings viii.

The influence of the Temple upon the national religion was, however, rather gradually than immediately exerted. We are not to suppose that Solomon had any projects for centralizing worship by the methods that Hezekiah and Josiah afterwards attempted. Apart from his desire to carry out David's wishes and to honour Jehovah, Solomon was no doubt actuated by the desires which led every great Eastern monarch, and even one

of the last and weakest of Judah's kings,[1] to perpetuate his name and fame by a monumental building. In the dedication ceremony it was Solomon himself and not the high priest who was the central figure. No attempt was made to abolish the local shrines, and we find that Bethel, Gilgal, and other places retained their popularity for long years to come. On the other hand, the Temple was a definite symbol of the fact that Jehovah was the one God; His creative power and His infinite nature are asserted in Solomon's prayer at the dedication festival. The Temple was a refuge for the purer form of Jehovah worship as against the more debased forms of local cults. From the Temple came forth the Book of the Law, which inspired the great religious revival in Josiah's time.

*1 Kings viii 27.

Thus the real importance of the Temple to the religious life of Israel lay in the future. The fact that it was constantly associated with the House of David, the one permanent dynasty in Israel, no doubt contributed to increase its influence. At the time of its dedication we observe certain symbols as part of its furniture, such as the brazen serpent and the pillars, with which aids to faith a later generation was able to dispense; while Solomon himself opened the door to foreign influences which were calculated rather to disturb than to preserve the purity of worship. Alliances with foreign nations were often cemented by marriages, and in any case implied the introduction or the

[1] *Jer.* xxii 13.

admission of foreign religions. Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and other peoples furnished wives for Solomon's harem, and had their temples about Jerusalem. Such toleration, though essential to Solomon's foreign policy, brought him into collision with the prophets. At the same time the forced labour and the heavy taxation bore hard upon the people, and here again the prophets were ready to champion their cause. Ahijah of Shiloh encouraged Jeroboam, the overseer of Solomon's fortification work in Millo and round Jerusalem, to cherish projects of revolt. Solomon easily crushed his attempt, and Jeroboam was forced to flee to Egypt, where he took refuge with Shishak or Sheshonk, the reigning Pharaoh, and awaited the occasion of Solomon's death to renew his claims on behalf of the people.

1 Kings xi 26–40.

Other frontier disturbances also took place. Edom rose in revolt under a prince who had escaped to Egypt when David's forces ravaged the country. The Pharaoh had brought up this prince, Hadad, with his own children; he now returned to Edom and made himself independent.[1] He cannot, however, have recovered the whole of his territory, as Solomon retained command of the caravan route to the Red Sea. In the north, Rezon, a refugee from the court

1 Kings xi 14–25.

[1] The governing power in Egypt was at this time divided between two lines of kings who reigned concurrently at Tanis in the Delta and at Thebes. It was naturally with the nearer or Tanite dynasty that Palestine maintained relations—a dynasty too weak, in view of the divided state of the country, to attempt an aggressive policy on its northern frontier, until Shishak came to the throne. Hadad must have lived some twenty years in Egypt, and was probably living at the time of Shishak's invasion.

of the King of Zobah, had established himself as a guerrilla chieftain at the time when David defeated Hadadezer. Rezon now seized Damascus, and founded a kingdom which was a serious menace to Israel for many long years to come. In a word, if Solomon's reign marked the highest point of Israel's power and prosperity, it also marked the beginning of her downfall. It was a reign which definitely displayed the contradiction between a monarchy and the religious destiny of the nation which is indicated at the beginning of the book of Samuel. Israel could not become a great commercial or military power and at the same time retain her exclusiveness, and the rise of commerce under Solomon was a new and disastrous influence upon the simplicity of the national life. Town life began; class distinctions grew wider as wealth was unequally distributed; the simplicity of country life was exchanged for the pursuit of riches. In a later generation we shall find that these tendencies resulted in the formation of a plutocracy and the rise of a land problem, as the small farmer left his land for the towns or was expropriated by the rich who wished to form large estates. The consequence was a general change in the economic basis of the national life.

PART II

CHAPTER I

Introductory

The division of the kingdom between Israel and Judah, the history and the consequences of which are now to be considered, was an event which sprang from causes existing long before Rehoboam was born. We have noted a tendency to monarchy as clearly perceptible in the age of the Judges: a judge would organize the government of an area under his influence by delegating authority to his sons or adherents; and these would naturally attempt to maintain or extend their own power when their ruler died. The principle of hereditary succession had thus been propounded, and, in the case of Abimelech, upheld for a few years. But the time was not yet ripe for monarchy as such; only once are the tribes represented as acting in concert, and then to punish one of their number. Occasional federations of a few tribes were made against foreign invaders, as under Deborah and Barak, Gideon or Jephthah; but these movements became the cause of inter-

*Judges ix; x 3; xii 8-14.

*Judges xx.

tribal jealousies, and Ephraim in particular strove to assert a claim to pre-eminence and consideration. Not until the several tribes had gained a secure hold of their respective territories and had learned the lessons of local government and organization, could any attempt be made to weld the Israelites into a nation. When the age of oligarchy was past, the pressure of Philistine invasion became intolerable, and the need for united national action evoked the demand for a king.

*Judges viii, xii.

The theory of kingship as voiced by the people was simple enough; other nations prospered under the institution, and why should not the Israelites imitate their example? But in practice the institution of monarchy led to a contradiction which Samuel clearly foresaw. The destiny of Israel, in the opinion of the prophets, was primarily religious: Israel was to be a separate and peculiar people, to whom had been committed the oracles of God. But a successful monarchy was bound to bring material changes which would obscure or destroy the religious ideal. Palestine was self-supporting; the country could even export a little wine and oil; and so long as the Israelites remained an agricultural and pastoral people, relying upon yeoman service for their military power, the religious purpose of the nation was not likely to suffer. But once within the arena of foreign politics, once infected with the desire for commercial wealth and the refinements of civilization, the national purity would be impaired.

*1 Sam. viii 20.

The agricultural system would be disturbed by the growth of foreign trade, while intermarriage with foreigners and the entry of foreign religions would destroy both the religious and the economic basis upon which the prophets considered the nation to rest. In this contradiction of purpose we may find a key to many of the struggles which disturbed the nation under monarchy. Israel would be apart and exclusive, and yet she would be as others: religious, and yet secular.

Saul's monarchy ended in failure, because he was unable to appreciate the necessity of working in co-operation with the religious forces of the country. He made no attempt to centralize his government, or to impress his subjects with any display of royal state; an able soldier, he remained a simple peasant. But the fact that he had been king had familiarized the people with the idea of monarchical government, and thus far cleared the way for his successor. David succeeded where Saul had failed, by reason of his training and experience and by force of character. During years of exile and guerrilla warfare David had learned the value of organization; he was attractive and conciliatory, while Saul was distant and overbearing; he made friends under adversity, while Saul lost friends in prosperity. David secured the kingdom by right of conquest, and held it by personal popularity and military prestige. He made mistakes, such as the attempt at a census, which was perhaps intended as preliminary to the formation of a standing army; he committed sins, and

repented nobly. But he defeated and crushed all enemies in the immediate neighbourhood of his kingdom; he provided a capital city, a court with Oriental state, and a centralized government. His influence made for unity; yet even he was unable to make "Israel" and "Judah" feel themselves one nation. Solomon is a less human, a less tangible, and in some respects a more impressive figure. He comes before us in an official rather than in a personal capacity; we cannot conceive him as dancing before the ark, nor do any misfortunes or any adversity reveal his heart to us as we see that of David. But his foreign reputation, his elaborate organization, and the rapid growth of trade are enough to show that he rose to the opportunities of his position; and as long as he was upon the throne the forces of disruption were impotent. At the same time these forces were aggravated by his methods of organization and his building enterprises; the drain of men and wealth from the northern states, in order to increase the splendour of Judah and her capital, was a chief cause of discontent. Solomon's efforts were directed to the consolidation of what his father had gained: Syria and Edom asserted their independence, but David's hold of these countries may have been little more than nominal. Solomon maintained peace because he prepared for war, and his introduction of cavalry was an innovation which testifies to his vigilance. He built fortresses to secure the trade routes to his country, and cemented

*2 Sam. xix 40.

*1 Kings xi 14–25.

*1 Kings ix 15–18.

his relations with foreign powers by the customary method of royal marriages.

The rapid increase of wealth and population under his rule was not without its effect upon the national character. Probably the actual conditions of life had persisted almost unchanged from the days of the Judges, for in a settled agricultural people change proceeds but slowly. But new influences had begun to modify the national life and were eventually to produce the consequences which Amos and Isaiah lamented and reproved. The growth of trade drew men from the country to the towns; a general level of prosperity was replaced by extremes of wealth and poverty. Class interests and prejudices were formed. The rich merchants soon began to desire country residences and estates, and expropriated the small yeomen by various devices, among which the perversion of justice was prominent. The latter gravitated to the towns, and helped to swell the casual labouring or the mendicant classes, while their disappearance tended to undermine the real military strength of the country. Pliny's complaint, *latifundia perdidere Italiam*, will be found, as the history of the kings progresses, to be not without parallel in Palestine.

*Cp. 1 Kings iv 22, 23, with 1 Sam. xvi 20, for the Court.

The changes which took place in religious theory and practice will be noted as the narrative proceeds. Meanwhile it must be observed that the conception of a god as national and territorial was by no means peculiar to the Hebrew people. In the period of the Judges we have seen

*Judges xi 24.

Jephthah recognizing the national god of the Ammonites. The power of these gods was regarded as conterminous with the land over which they ruled, and as closely connected with the soil of the land. Between the god and his people a contractual obligation existed; the people paid a due amount of worship and sacrifice and were entitled to receive a due measure of protection in return. The defeat of a people in war implied that their god was a demonstrated failure. Furthermore, the people came into connection with the god only as members of their nation; hence individual prayer to the god was a proceeding hardly comprehensible, unless it was made at a definite sanctuary, altar, or other centre of worship. The sanctuary and the altar were thus essential to religious intercourse, and acts of worship at a distance were confined to vows to be performed at the sanctuary. These conceptions, and also the forms of ritual and worship practised by other tribes, were in large measure shared by the Hebrews; and the history of their religious progress is the history of the methods by which their prophets and religious leaders strove to show the people that Jehovah's action could be read in history, that His character could be learned by observing His dealings with His people, and that such observation would show Him as vastly different from the gods of the surrounding nations. This difference was found to consist in the fact that Jehovah had a will and purpose of His own, that He was not content with

*1 Sam. xxvi 19.

*1 Kings viii 31-38.

any service that the people might please to give Him, and that He was not necessarily bound to give prosperity in payment for what the people might consider adequate service. In the prosperous times of David and Solomon the might of Jehovah was readily acknowledged; but when dissension within and disaster from without befell the nation, the question was asked why Jehovah allowed such evils to come upon His people. In such cases the theory of the surrounding nations was that the god was either helpless or was temporarily offended and could be won back by sacrifice and worship. When Israel put the theory to the test of practice, the results were found to be wanting, and it remained for the prophets to point out the error. Jehovah had a controversy with His people; He had not forsaken them; but the calamities of the times were so many warnings that He was very near, that He desired obedience and not sacrifice, that His holy purpose must be worked out, and that He would even use other nations as His instrument to punish His people for their obstinacy.

*1 Sam. xv 22.

Thus, if "theocracy" was a form of government, it was not peculiar to the Israelites. Jehovah was distinguished from other gods by His personal character rather than by forms of worship. To reveal the former was the work of the prophets; to perform the latter the business of the priests. Hence we shall find that priest and prophet by no means invariably strove towards a common end. Under David and Solomon the

*1 Sam. xiii 9.

high priest was a court official; but the king could also act as priest upon occasion. Saul quarrelled with Samuel upon this question; Solomon and not the high priest was the principal figure at the consecration of the Temple. As court officials the priests were also possessed of political influence and importance. The connection between the king and priest and the division of their functions may be referred to the days of Moses. When the ordinary judges could not decide a case by custom and precedent it was to be brought before God, that is, to the sanctuary, and decided by oath or by the sacred lot. The erection of the Temple did not destroy the importance of the old religious centres, such as Gilgal and Bethel, though Jerusalem was the chief centre of attraction by reason of the fact that the ark was there situated. A religious centre was also a centre of trade and commerce, and a meeting point for social intercourse, and the possession and maintenance of such centres was therefore of importance to the districts in which they lay and to the local priests.

*1 Kings i 32.

*Ex. xviii 15. 2 Sam. viii 15. 1 Kings iii 28.

Apart from the information derived from the monuments of the surrounding nations, Assyrian, Egyptian, and others, which will be noticed in its proper place, our chief sources of information for this period of Jewish history are the books of Kings and Chronicles, and the writings of the prophets who lived within the period. The books of Chronicles belong to the age of Ezra and Nehemiah, and were written with the special intention

of displaying the importance of Judah, the greatness of David's dynasty, and the position of the Levites in the chief religious centre, Jerusalem. Special stress is therefore laid upon matters of ritual. Allowance must be made for the writer's point of view, in using the books of Chronicles for historical purposes. It should be noted that the writers of Kings and Chronicles constantly used earlier records, and that their works are largely compilations made from the writings of men who were contemporary with the events of which they wrote. Thus the Chronicler used the "book or history of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer". He also refers to the books of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Jehu the son of Hanani. In using these books for historical purposes, we must also remember that the writers were bound by certain limitations which it would be folly to ignore. Their purpose was not to write a political or military history of their times, but to describe God's dealings with His chosen people. In the steady maintenance of this purpose their "inspired" character consists; when we find that their chronology is often inaccurate, that the sequence of events is changed or confused, or that affairs which are deeply interesting to a modern historian are neglected, we are not obliged to cast doubts upon their veracity of purpose or upon the "inspired" nature of their narrative. Chronology, for instance, was of little interest to them: Jehovah

*2 Chron. ix 29.

*2 Chron. xiii 22; xx 34.

guiding His people, sifting and purifying them for their great work in the history of the world—this was their great theme, and to this all other historical interests were subordinated.

CHAPTER II

The Disruption. The House of Jeroboam in Israel

Upon Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam by an Ammonite woman, Naamah, was acknowledged as his successor. The new ruler was confronted with a situation which demanded more than ordinary insight and statesmanship for its successful handling. The principle of hereditary succession was, indeed, firmly established; but there was general dissatisfaction with the methods of government hitherto employed, and desire for reform was widespread. The chief causes of discontent were the oppressive taxation and the system of forced labour which had enabled Solomon to construct his magnificent buildings. Moreover, the problem of welding the tribes into one coherent nation had never been solved: the opposition between north and south, between Ephraim and Judah, had continued with little abatement from the days of the Judges. David had ruled by right of conquest, and the forces which made for disruption had been

1 Kings xii.

*1 Kings v 13.

held in check by his personal popularity and his military prestige. The fame and wealth of Solomon and the success of his enterprises had gratified the people, while the growth of trade and commerce with its disturbing effects upon an agricultural and pastoral community, and the new relations with foreign states had distracted attention from domestic grievances. But Rehoboam possessed the advantages neither of his father nor of his grandfather. His accession afforded a favourable opportunity for demanding reforms, and his meeting with the northern tribes at Shechem was the moment chosen for presenting the national demands.

We are told that "all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king". Why the coronation should not have taken place in Jerusalem is not clear; but the distinction between "Israel" and "Judah" as separate parties had been pronounced even in David's time, and the assembly may have been called to confirm the choice made by Judah, or to present a protest against the claims of Judah to pre-eminence. We may also regard the choice of Shechem as the protest of local patriotism against the choice of Jerusalem as the capital. Traditions of Abraham and Jacob centred round it: Joshua had read the law there. Why should a recently captured fortress supplant the ancient and venerated shrine? Jeroboam had been recalled from Egypt by the leaders of the party, in order that he might be present at their interview with the king. As an Ephraimite he was prepared to support

*2 Sam. xix 40–43.

1 Kings xi 26–40.

the claims of his tribe; his experience as overseer of their forced labour had made him fully conversant with their grievances; his selection as the champion of reform by Ahijah the Shilonite had given him the influence necessary to assume the lead. The meeting at Shechem was delayed until he had returned from Egypt, and perhaps in order to give him time to return. Hence an interval must have elapsed between the death of Solomon and the assembly at Shechem, and it is possible that Rehoboam had been already acknowledged, formally or informally, as king in Judah.

Rehoboam's age is uncertain; probably he was some forty years of age; but, old or young, he was no statesman. Though Solomon's counsellors urged upon him the fact that a few concessions would secure the loyalty of his subjects, he preferred the advice of his own party, the "young men". The demands of the people were rejected with insults: the cry of revolt was raised, and Rehoboam made a last attempt to quell the disturbance by dispatching an official to the irritated leaders. For this purpose he chose Adoram, and no more obnoxious choice could have been made than the hated overseer of the forced labour service. Adoram was stoned to death, and Rehoboam fled to Jerusalem to avoid a similar fate. Jeroboam was made king of the northern tribes, Rehoboam being left (as David upon his accession) with Judah only and part of Benjamin. The disruption of the kingdom was accomplished.

*1 Kings iv 6.

*1 Kings xii 20.

The division proved ultimately of advantage to

neither of the opposed parties. The prospects which lay before either kingdom, and the resources upon which each could rely, will be found upon comparison to vary considerably in nature and extent. Israel possessed, indeed, a vast numerical superiority over Judah, and the most fertile parts of Palestine were in her power; but neither upon the north nor on the east was there any natural barrier which could shield her from the invasions of foreign powers. If Judah was smaller in extent and numerically inferior, she was better protected by nature upon every side, while she also enjoyed the considerable advantage conferred by the possession of the capital city and the chief sanctuary. In the struggles of the northern powers, Syria and Assyria, with Egypt, Palestine was often a point of passage: the northern powers regarded the land as a convenient outpost against Egypt, while for Egypt, Palestine was a valuable bulwark against northern aggressors. Judah, among her hills and away from the main road between north and south, was more sheltered by her natural position from these invading storms, and was therefore able to maintain her existence for a longer period than Israel. She possessed also a firmly established dynasty, whereas the northern kingdom was continually weakened by revolution and dynastic change.

Upon his return to Jerusalem, Rehoboam at once assembled all his forces for an attempt to crush the rebels. This intention was forbidden by the prophet Shemaiah, whose message was directed

to "all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the remnant of the people". By the remnant is probably meant the dwellers on the territory of Judah who belonged to the northern tribes, and who had joined Judah rather than migrate to other homes in the north. Though no conflict took place upon this occasion, the two kingdoms remained in a state of war for the next sixty years, and at an early date within this period Judah suffered from an Egyptian invasion. Shishak, or Sheshonkh I, took away the treasures of Jerusalem, including Solomon's golden shields, which were borne by the guards when escorting the king to the Temple. It is reasonable to suppose that Shishak undertook this expedition at the prompting of Jeroboam, to whom he had previously shown friendship. Possibly Solomon's Egyptian princess had borne children, and Shishak may have felt that the choice of Rehoboam, the son of an Ammonitess, was a slight upon the claims of his own family. The Chronicler adds that Shishak took the "fenced cities of Judah", but there is nothing to show that Jerusalem was captured by him. He has left a list of cities captured in this campaign on a monument at Karnak, in Upper Egypt: the list includes cities of Israel, as well as of Judah, but all towns which sent him tribute may have been recorded as well as those which were taken by force of arms. Jeroboam may have found himself the loser by his attempt to crush Judah through Shishak. Rehoboam replaced the golden shields

1 Kings xiv 25–31.
2 Chron. xii 2–4 and 9–16.

1 Kings xi 40.

by others of bronze, and did his best to defend the scanty territory left to him. He fortified a number of cities to guard the southern approaches to Hebron, and two passes to Jerusalem from the coast. Jericho appears to have passed from Rehoboam's control; in fact, no cities north of Jerusalem are mentioned, and it seems that the capital city was thus itself almost upon the frontier line of Rehoboam's territory.

*2 Chron. xi 6-10.

Meanwhile, Jeroboam had chosen Shechem as his capital, the ancient sanctuary within his own tribe of Ephraim, though it did not long remain the centre of government. It was important for him to have a stronghold also on the east side of the Jordan, and for this purpose he selected Penuel, which was situated in Gilead near one of the Jordan fords, which could thus be guarded in case of invasion. Jeroboam was also profoundly disturbed by the fact that the religious pre-eminence of Judah threatened his independence. How far the Temple had become a point of pilgrimage for the northern Israelites under Solomon we do not know; but Jeroboam's measures show that considerable numbers were attracted from his own territory. Visits to Jerusalem might not only prove a source of danger to himself, as the text states, but would also divert a considerable amount of trade from his kingdom; for the sanctuaries of the time were not only religious and social centres, but the chief markets of the country (see p. 151). Jeroboam, therefore, set up a debased form of Jehovah worship

1 Kings xii 25 to end.
*Judges ix 45.

*Judges viii 8.

at either limit of his kingdom; the southern centre, Bethel, was only twelve miles from Jerusalem, and, apart from its ancient religious associations, stood near the meeting point of two trade routes, facts which sufficiently explain its choice. The Levites had retired to the southern kingdom, and Jeroboam therefore selected his priests from the people at large. Following the practice of previous kings (see p. 151) Jeroboam himself offered incense at the altar, and when he was thus engaged, a prophet of Judah is said to have made his protest against the desecration of Jehovah's worship. The mention of the "cities of Samaria" in this narrative points to the fact that the compiler of Kings derived it from a source comparatively late in date, as Samaria was not built, nor was any district so called, until the time of Omri. Jeroboam's overthrow is also foretold by the aged prophet Ahijah, to whom the king had sent his wife to enquire concerning the sickness of their child.

*2 Chron. xi 13, 14.

1 Kings xiii, xiv.

Meanwhile Rehoboam had died, and was succeeded by his son, Abijah (or Abijam, as he is less correctly named in Kings), in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam. The book of Kings has little to say of him except that he made no attempt to remove the religious impurities which his father had permitted. The Chronicler, on the other hand, has an account of his battle against Jeroboam near Mount Zemaraim, in the neighbourhood of Bethel, in which Jeroboam was defeated with great loss; this success is said to have

1 Kings xv 1-8.
2 Chron. xiii.

enabled Abijah to advance the frontier of Judah to Bethel and Ephraim: this increase of territory was not permanently held, for under the next king we find the frontier south of Ramah. There are obvious discrepancies between Kings and Chronicles in their accounts of Abijah's reign, and the questions to which they give rise are more easily asked than answered. Abijah's speech before the battle of Zemaraim represents him as more devoted to Jehovah than the writer of Kings seems to have thought; it is also remarkable that so important a victory should find no mention in Kings. The Chronicler seems to have relied in this case upon the "history of the prophet Iddo"; but how far his narrative is coloured by the traditions of a later age we cannot possibly tell. Abijah, who was descended on his mother's side from Absalom, was able to hand on the kingdom to his son when his short reign of three or two and a half years was closed. Thus the dynastic principle was firmly established in Judah, in strong contrast to the tottering thrones of the northern rulers. He was succeeded by his son, Asa, who had reigned for two years when Jeroboam died a sudden death, according to the Chronicler.

*1 Kings xv 17.

*2 Chron. xiii 20.

Jeroboam was succeeded by his son Nadab, who reigned for nearly two years. He made war against the Philistines, and attempted to retake Gibbethon. This town, on the border of Sharon, and north of Philistia, had originally belonged to the tribe of Dan, and was of importance for the defence of Israel's southern

1 Kings xv 25-34.
*Josh. xix 44.

frontier; the siege seems to have been continued in a desultory manner until the time of Zimri. Nadab was murdered by Baasha during the course of these operations; possibly some tribal jealousy actuated this rising, as Baasha is expressly stated to have belonged to the tribe of Issachar, while Jeroboam was an Ephraimite. In any case, Baasha destroyed the whole of Jeroboam's family in order to remove any possible rival, and so inaugurated that succession of usurpers, whose power was founded upon military pre-eminence, and whose claims were secured by massacre. Baasha continued the war both with the Philistines and with Judah; he fortified the town of Ramah in Benjamin, five miles north of Jerusalem, with the idea of cutting off intercourse between Israel and Judah. It would seem that in spite of the state of war, members of the northern kingdom were in the habit of visiting Jerusalem, and Baasha was probably anxious to prevent those dangers which Jeroboam foresaw when he set up the calves at Bethel and Dan. Asa met this danger by adopting a short-sighted policy which was rebuked by the prophet Hanani, and was to prove a source of continual danger and trouble to Palestine. With the treasures of the Temple and of his own house he bribed Benhadad of Damascus to break his league with Israel and to invade the northern provinces. The expedient proved successful for the moment; the Syrian king overran Naphtali, and Baasha was obliged to withdraw from Ramah; with the materials which he left

1 Kings xv 17.

2 Chron. xvi 7.

behind him Asa fortified outpost towns in Benjamin with desperate haste, employing a general levy of his subjects upon the work. Nevertheless, he was unable to venture an attack upon Israel on the south, nor did he interfere in the struggle which disturbed Israel after the overthrow of Baasha's dynasty. But the consequences of Asa's opportunist policy became a heavy burden; henceforward Syria constantly intervened in the affairs of Palestine until she fell before the growing power of Assyria. This Benhadad was probably the grandson of Rezon and is the first king mentioned under this name, which may have been a dynastic title.

*1 Kings xi 23.

Baasha had abandoned Shechem, and had transferred his capital to Tirzah. He was rebuked for his evil government by Jehu the son of Hanani, but he died in peace. His son Elah had reigned two years when he was murdered during a drunken carouse by Zimri, another usurper, who massacred the whole of Baasha's family. The absence of the troops at Gibbethon, the siege of which was still continued, may have provided Zimri with his opportunity; he had, however, mistaken the extent of his influence; the army declared for Omri, their captain, who immediately marched upon Tirzah. Zimri saw that all was lost, set fire to the palace and perished in the flames. For three or four years Omri was engaged in a struggle with Tibni; Zimri had been a military officer, but there are indications to show that he was supported by the civil population and that Tibni

*1 Kings xv 21.
1 Kings xvi 1–22.

also espoused their cause against the military element. In any case, the latter party proved victorious, and Omri was left in undisputed possession of Israel.

Asa continued to rule throughout Omri's reign, and proved himself one of the best kings that Judah ever had. He strove to put down idolatry, and in this connection we have a special mention of the "queen-mother", Maachah, who was not his mother, as the text states, but his grandmother. She was a leader of the idolatrous party, and Asa was obliged to depose her from her position as queen-mother, and to destroy an idol that she had set up. He also removed the high places in Judah, and his influence as a religious reformer seems to have extended into the northern kingdom. The Chronicler tells us that the high places in Israel were not taken away, as though Asa might have been expected to reform religious practice in the northern kingdom. He also began to replace some of the Temple treasures which Shishak had taken away, though the price of Benhadad's alliance doubtless brought this work to an end. His war with Baasha has been mentioned. He also reorganized the offensive and defensive forces of Judah, and was able to repel an Ethiopian invasion under Zerah (probably the Egyptian Usarkon I), who was defeated near Mareshah, and pursued to Gerar. Asa was buried with much splendour, after a reign of forty-one years. He was obviously an energetic and capable ruler, and his reign was distinguished by military success as well as by religious reform.

1 Kings xv 9.
2 Chron. xiv, xv.

Asa and Omri died nearly at the same time; the genius of the latter and the new policy which his house began was in some measure imitated by Judah under Asa's son, Jehoshaphat. With the extinction of the house of Jeroboam in Israel, the age of hostility between Israel and Judah comes to an end. Jeroboam and his descendants had made a definite breach between the kingdoms; they had been utterly unable to found a permanent dynasty in the north, had weakened the resisting power of the nation against the invasion of foreign enemies or foreign religions, and had consistently lowered its moral vitality.

Note on 1 Kings xii 15: "For the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat".

At first sight the plain meaning of this passage would seem to be that the Lord had led Rehoboam astray in order that Ahijah's prophecy might be fulfilled; in other words, that Rehoboam's sin was caused by the Lord, an interpretation which will not satisfy our moral sense. The same difficulty arises in 1 Kings xxii, when the Lord sends forth a lying spirit into the mouth of Ahab's prophets; or in the book of Exodus, when "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh". The latter case, however, should indicate an explanation; we are also told that "Pharaoh hardened his heart", and that "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened". The three expressions describe the same process from different points of view. That process is the spectacle known in the moral world as "moral blindness". One sin leads to another with ever-increasing rapidity, until the historian observes the strange case of moral infatuation, of a man rushing onward wilfully to his obvious destruction. The early historian does not consider that any human agency is adequate to account for this phenomenon, any more than for the natural phenomena

of lightning or storm; as the thunder is God's voice, so Rehoboam or Ahab are overthrown directly by the hand of God, who "sent them strong delusion that they should believe a lie". The adoption of this point of view, when attempting to explain such cases, is common to other early literatures beside that of the Hebrews; see Prof. Butcher's brilliant essay in *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius.*

There is, however, another aspect of this question, which is opened by St. Paul, Romans ix 17. Paul there argues that God raised Pháraoh up for the purpose of showing His power in him; Pharaoh was especially made in order that he might become the object of a series of judgments which would arouse men's faith in Jehovah. If, however, Pharaoh's fall was thus predestined, so also were the impious acts which led to it, and which justified it in the eyes of men. Was, then, Pharaoh responsible for his actions, seeing that Jehovah's purpose could not be fulfilled without them, and is the punishment inflicted upon Pharaoh compatible with the righteousness of God? Paul answers with a reference to the figure of the potter and the clay; the Creator can do as He will with what He has made. The problem at issue is the apparent contradiction between the foreknowledge of God and the free will of man. If God knows all that we shall do in our lives subsequent to the present moment, these future acts of ours must be foreordained; how then are we free to act? Our limited human faculties are unable to reach a complete explanation of the difficulty, but we can see that the cause of it lies in the very limitation of those faculties. We can only think of events as happening in succession or in time; "foreordain" and "predestine" are terms that have no meaning except with reference to time; but we must not therefore assume that the Divine mind is limited in this respect; see 2 Peter iii 8.

CHAPTER III

The House of Omri

Torn by dynastic struggles and internal faction, with her military strength impaired, Israel seemed to be rapidly sinking into decay and dissolution. But in Omri she found a most capable ruler, and his energy gave her a new lease of life. From the book of Kings we learn only two facts concerning him: that he made no attempt to check the prevailing idolatry, and that he transferred his capital to a new site. Shechem had seemed an obvious centre of government, as it was situated upon the main trade route across the western range of hills and enjoyed an old reputation as an important town; but it was probably abandoned because the site could not be satisfactorily fortified. Tirzah was now in ruins, and Omri selected a new site for his capital upon the western face of Mount Ephraim; his choice was doubtless dictated by the military possibilities of the site and by the fact that its geographical position would keep him more easily in touch with his Phœnician allies. Samaria is the Greek form of the name Shomeron, the "watch-tower". Omri's new foundation rapidly justified his enterprise: "the head of Ephraim is Samaria", and the northern tribes speedily recognized this city as their capital. To Ezekiel Samaria was even the elder sister of Jerusalem.

1 Kings xvi 23–27.

*Is. vii 9.

*Ezek. xxiii 4.

Jeroboam's revolt had undoubtedly been a con-

servative revolution, and was inspired by a wish to avoid the burdens of a more complex civilization by a return to the old simplicity of life. Omri and his successors declared definitely for Solomon's policy, to which the prophetic party were opposed. Peace was maintained throughout Israel by a wise system of internal government. The neighbouring tribes were kept in check, and close relations were reopened with Phœnicia. This foreign policy, which David had begun, was entirely in the economic interest of Israel, which could find no market for its agricultural commodities except in Phœnician harbours. Revived prosperity and military success produced a religious revival which is expressed in the work of Elijah and Elisha.

*Micah vi 16.

For Omri's military exploits our only authority is the famous "Moabite stone". This inscription, the remains of which are now in the Louvre, is said to have been made in the second year of the reign of Ahaz of Israel, and was discovered at Dibon, three miles north of the river Arnon, in 1868. The discoverer (the Rev. F. A. Klein) offended the Arabs, who broke the stone in pieces; but a squeeze had been previously taken of the inscription and the fragments were collected by other explorers, so that little is now missing. The inscription was set up by Mesha, King of Moab, to commemorate his successful revolt against Ahaziah and Jehoram. He gives an account of the previous history of his country, and refers to Omri as follows: "Omri was King of Israel, and oppressed Moab during many days, and Chemosh was angry with

his land. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab. In my days he said, Let us go and I will see my desire upon him and his house; and Israel said, I shall destroy it for ever. Now Omri took the land of Medeba, and occupied it in his day and in the days of his son, forty years; and Chemosh had mercy on it in my time." We shall return to this inscription at the time of the Moabite revolt. Meanwhile we may notice that Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites. Medeba was an ancient Moabite town, and a sanctuary of the Moabites in the time of Ahaz. Its ruins still show that it was a place of much importance. Thus it was almost certainly Omri who reduced Moab to payment of the heavy tribute afterwards mentioned. His reputation spread beyond the confines of Palestine, which is mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as "the land of Omri". His success, however, was not unbroken; he was defeated in the Syrian war, which continued, and the Syrians forced him to assign part of Samaria to them as a special quarter. He does not appear to have come in contact with the Assyrians, who were then preparing to extend their power westward.

*Num. xxi 30.
Is. xv 2.

*2 Kings iii 4.

1 Kings xx 34.

Concerning Ahab, his successor, our records are as full as they are meagre concerning Omri. Ahab continued Omri's foreign policy and strove to make Israel a power among the nations. To cement the Phœnician alliance he had married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre,

and her influence involved both Israel and Judah in a struggle between rival religions, respectively championed by the prophets and the court. At first sight Ahab might seem to have been merely following the policy of Solomon in allowing his wife to continue her own worship in his dominions by building a temple and altar to Melkarth, the god of Tyre, within Samaria. But the energy of Jezebel, and the attractiveness of the Phœnician Baal worship, made it clear that a larger question was at stake. Previous idolatry, the "calves" of Jeroboam, might have been condoned on the plea that nothing more was involved than the worship of Jehovah under visible forms. In many cases it is likely that local Canaanite Baals or "Lords" had been confused or identified with Jehovah. No such excuse and no such attempts at identification were now possible. The question was whether there was room for two gods in the land — the foreign Baal and the national Jehovah. This problem was but another outcome of the divergent theories concerning the nature of the monarchy (see p. 145). Could Israel exist under a king, living a simple life of seclusion and working out her religious destiny apart from all other nations; or were foreign alliances, conquests and international trade necessary to a successful monarchy? Conservatism led by the prophets distrusted the secular idea of success. If alliances leading to trade and commerce, with increased military power and prestige, could only be purchased at the price of religious innovation, the prophets were prepared to abandon these advan-

tages. The domestic history of Ahab's reign, therefore, comes before us as the history of the struggle between Elijah and Jezebel. Before discussing this question we may first consider the foreign history of Ahab's reign as far as it is known to us.

Palestine had been hard pressed by the Syrian war ever since the disastrous policy of Asa had brought Benhadad I into northern Israel. Omri had not succeeded in driving back the Syrian invasions, and during Ahab's reign the Syrians besieged Samaria. Probably the Benhadad who then led them was a son of the ruler whose help had been bought by Asa. He brought a large force supplied by tributary princes, and Ahab, thinking that resistance was hopeless, was prepared to surrender under the terms first offered by the enemy. His submission was apparently met with an arrogant proposal to plunder the city, and Ahab's council advised resistance. Benhadad threatened, in language of boastful exaggeration, to bring such a host that if each man carried away but a handful of dust, Samaria would disappear. Ahab replied with a proverbial warning, and at the advice of a prophet made a sortie while the enemy's leaders were engaged in a drunken carouse. The attack was successful, and the Syrians fled in confusion. Ahab received a warning from the prophet that the struggle would be renewed at the end of the year. The Syrians, believing that they had attacked the Hebrew God in His stronghold, the hills, hoped to find Him powerless in the plain (see p. 149),

1 Kings xx 1–43.

John Bartholomew & Co. Edinr.

and a battle was fought at Aphek, in the plain of Esdraelon, where there was space for the Syrian cavalry to manœuvre. In spite of the great numerical superiority of the Syrians, they were again defeated, and Benhadad fled to the city, where he and his people were at Ahab's mercy. Benhadad's offer of submission was accepted, and upon his agreement to provide a Hebrew quarter in Damascus, and to surrender the conquests of his father, his life was spared. Ahab was sternly rebuked by one of the "sons of the prophets" for allowing Benhadad to live. Possibly Ahab's policy was dictated by the necessity of opposing the advance westward of the Assyrian empire.

*1 Sam. xxix 1.

The Assyrians are of such considerable importance to the future history of Palestine that some account of their previous history may be here given. Assyria, the district in the Upper Tigris, was first colonized from its southern neighbour, Babylonia. The first Babylonians of whom we have any record were a non-Semitic race, and spoke and wrote a language which seems to have been Mongolian in character. At a very early but uncertain date, another race entered eastern Babylonia, the so-called Sumerians or Accadians, who are thought to have come from central Asia. Their territory was next invaded by Semitic immigrants, who settled there and amalgamated with the Accadians or Sumerians, eventually imposing their Semitic language upon the country, Sumerian or Accadian surviving only

*Gen. x 8–11.

as a literary language. The earliest historical king, Sargon of Agade, was a Semite, and reigned about 3750 B.C. The names of previous Sumerian rulers are known, and are thought to extend as far back as 4500 B.C. Until about 2500 B.C. little is known of the country. At that date we find a number of independent princes in power, who were overshadowed about 2200 B.C. by Hammurabi, who is best known to us from his legal code. In his time the Semites had advanced northward, and were founding settlements on the Tigris in the district even then known as Assyria. This emigration was increased by the movement of the Cassites, a warlike people from the east of the Tigris, who invaded Babylonia and oppressed the country. About 1700 B.C. Assyria became sufficiently strong to assert its independence. About 1300 B.C. the Semitic population of Babylonia had absorbed the Cassites, and war continued between Babylonia and Assyria, chiefly in consequence of disputes concerning the frontier line. This struggle came to a climax about 1275 B.C., when Assyria conquered Babylonia and became the leading power until the destruction of Nineveh. After a period of varying success which lasted for some four hundred years, Assyria's triumph was assured by Tukulti-Ninip II, who again overran Babylonia, and was succeeded by Ashur-nasir-pal in 885 B.C., one of the greatest Assyrian kings. He was contemporary with Asa and Omri, and his last campaign was directed against northern Syria in 867 B.C. This westward movement was continued by his son and successor,

Shalmaneser II (860–825 B.C.), whose continual campaigns made him master of western Asia, from the Armenian mountains to the Persian Gulf, and from the frontiers of Media to the Mediterranean. He it was who first came in contact with the Israelites. He claims to have defeated a confederation of Syrian tribes in 854 B.C. at Karkar, near Hamath. As, however, he did not attack Damascus, and returned home immediately afterwards, we may conclude that the advantage lay with the allies. Among the contingents of the allied army was one of two thousand chariots and fifteen thousand men sent by *Akha-ab-bu matu Sir-la-ai*, Ahabba of the land of the Sirilites.[1] As Israel is usually known in Assyrian inscriptions as "the land of Omri", doubts have been cast upon the identification of this name with Ahab of Israel, but the majority of scholars accept it. Thus for the first time the Hebrews came in contact with the nation which was to carry them into captivity. The alliance between Israel and Syria must have been broken soon after this event, as we find the two peoples again at war. We now turn to consider the domestic and religious events of Ahab's reign.

These events centre round the impressive and mysterious personality of the prophet Elijah, who so impressed the national mind of the Hebrews that he became typical of the prophetic race, though his spoken utterances were few, and though he left no written record behind him. A native of Gilead, he came from that part

1 Kings xvii, xviii, xix.

[1] Inscription in the Nimroud Central Saloon, British Museum.

of the country which was least likely to be affected by foreign influence, and most likely to cling to the old habits and customs in vogue when the Hebrews first settled in Palestine. Elijah was the most conspicuous example of the prophet and his work as defined in the book of Exodus, and as the mouthpiece of God to man. He made no predictions for the future; he simply devoted his strength to declaring the will of Jehovah. To understand the nature and importance of the struggle we must remember that Ahab and Elijah held very opposite ideals of national success and prosperity. If alliances with other nations were to be made, their gods must be admitted to the country and foreign worship must be recognized. Elijah's religious ideal could only be realized if the nation lived in complete isolation, and abandoned all aspirations to world-power. Ahab doubtless regarded the agitation against himself as inspired only by political motives; he was prepared to treat Elijah as he afterwards treated Micaiah, in order to be master within his own house. From his point of view Elijah's policy was entirely unpatriotic. If we required any assurance of the divine nature of Elijah's commission, we could find it in the fact that the prophet's insight recognized that righteousness was higher than patriotism, and in the fact that Ahab himself could feel the justice of his rebukes

*Ex. iv 16.

*1 Kings xxii 27.

*1 Kings xxi 27.

The struggle could only be ended by the overthrow of the house of Omri, and in this task

C 309—(9)

BRONZE BANDS FROM THE GATES OF SHALMANESER II

Above, the king is seated in his camp, while his army attack the city. Below, the battering ram is in action, and figures of impaled prisoners are seen.

C 309—(10)

BRONZE BANDS FROM THE GATES OF SHALMANESER II

The king and his army are on the march, and are crossing a river by a bridge of boats.

Elijah's movement, if not himself, was assisted by two classes, the Nazirite sect of the Rechabites, who afterwards supported Jehu, and the prophetic guilds with which Elisha was closely connected. These forces will be discussed later. Elijah's first appearance is to proclaim a three years' drought as a chastisement upon king and people. During these years the prophet is miraculously supported by the brook Cherith and in the house of the widow of Zarephath. When the drought has had its effect, and many are ready to turn to Jehovah, Elijah throws down the gauntlet to Ahab, after meeting his servant Obadiah, and the challenge is issued for a trial by fire upon Mount Carmel. By this dramatic scene the people are convinced, the false prophets are slain, and the rain arrives. Elijah runs as a servant before Ahab to Jezreel, in token that he is ready to serve the king as well as Jehovah's people. The anger of Jezebel forces the prophet to flee to the wilderness of Beersheba. The reaction of mind after his recent efforts makes him long for death, but he is miraculously strengthened and travels to Horeb, where he receives a new manifestation of God's power, and the threefold command to anoint Hazael King of Syria, Jehu King of Israel, and Elisha as his own successor. The last only of these commands was performed by Elijah, who then made the wilderness of Damascus his headquarters: Hazael and Jehu were anointed by Elisha. Meanwhile it was not so much the scene on Mount Carmel which turned Ahab to repentance, nor was it the worship

of Baal which brought the prophet's fiercest denunciation upon the king: the judicial murder of Naboth stirred prophet and people most profoundly. We shall hear much at a later date of land-grabbing and of the methods by which it was pursued. Naboth's case seems to have been an early instance of the means by which large estates were formed. It was a case which deeply stirred public feeling, and men who could not understand Elijah's view of the national destiny were ready to believe that he was defending their ancient liberties against the caprice of a despot. Two witnesses, at any rate, of the scene, preserved a vivid recollection of it.

1 Kings xxi.

*2 Kings ix 25, 26.

Of events in Judah but little is heard during the struggle in Israel; Judah is but once mentioned in the story of Elijah, and she was overshadowed in importance by the growth of Israel under Ahab. Asa had been succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat, who proved himself a no less capable ruler; the military power of the kingdom was increased, tribute was received from the Philistines and the "Arabians", while an organization of teachers and overseers kept the king in touch with the cities of Judah, and preserved the purity of their religion and the sound administration of justice. The war between Israel and Judah was at an end; the house of Omri, following their traditional policy of domestic peace and commercial expansion, entered into an alliance with Judah; the good government

*1 Kings xix 3.

2 Chron. xvii, xviii.
1 Kings xxii.

C 309—(11)

STELE OF SHALMANESER II

Above him are the emblems of the Assyrian gods. The inscription describes his military expeditions, among which was his attack upon the King of Hamath, with whom Ahab was in alliance.

of Asa and Jehoshaphat had made the southern kingdom a factor of considerable importance in the politics of Palestine. The alliance was cemented by a marriage between Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, and Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, with disastrous results to the peace of Judah, as will afterwards be seen. The first practical outcome of the alliance was a joint expedition against the Syrians to recover Ramoth-Gilead. Apparently the Syrians had declined to fulfil the terms of the treaty with Ahab, under which they were to restore the cities taken from his father. For this, or for some reason unknown to us, the alliance between Israel and Syria had ceased to exist. Jehoshaphat's firm insistence that a prophet of Jehovah should be consulted is enough to show that he was by no means the vassal of Ahab, as has been supposed. The prophet's words were disregarded, and the battle ended in the defeat of the allied forces and the death of Ahab, in spite of his attempt to cheat his fate by hiding his identity. This attempt seems to have been the outcome of a strain of superstition in Ahab, to which many strong and vigorous natures are prone. Too prejudiced to recognize the prophet's authority, he yet was unable to shake off forebodings of disaster. So far as we can see him, he appears essentially a man of action, though subject to the whims and petulance of temper which are reputed to be characteristic of Eastern despots, and which Jezebel was able to use for her own purposes. His alliance with Phœnicia enabled him to imitate Solomon in the erection of magnificent

buildings; his "ivory house" and his palace are especially mentioned. If, from the religious point of view, his reign was an utter failure, from the secular standpoint it was a considerable success: he had revived the prosperity and prestige of his people; his action in opposing the Assyrians at Karkar (unless he was coerced by Benhadad) is evidence of a statesmanship unusual in Israelitish kings; and the figure of Ahab in his last battle, wounded to death, yet stayed up in his chariot till the evening, is not devoid of a certain heroic grandeur.

Of Ahab's son, Ahaziah, very little is recorded. He was rebuked by Elijah for consulting the Baal god of Ekron (Philistia was famous for its soothsayers) concerning his chance of recovery from an accident caused by a fall; he also joined, or wished to join, Jehoshaphat in a commercial venture at Ezion-geber, which proved a failure. The term "ships of Tarshish" is a generic name of which we have seen the use in Solomon's age. The want of a king in Edom facilitated the venture. The Moabites seized the opportunity to revolt upon Ahab's death. About this time is placed the translation of Elijah, "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof"—the champion, that is, of the true as opposed to the false nationalism. No other prophet so powerfully impressed the minds of the Jewish people or holds so large a place in the writings of the New Testament. He was a "prophet as fire and his word burned like a lamp", and the fulfilment of the prophecy which

1 Kings xxii 51.
2 Kings i, ii.
1 Kings xxii 48.
2 Chron. xx 36.

*Ecclus. xlviii 1.

foretold his return was ardently awaited by the Jews. The extent to which his name was in men's mouths is shown by the fact that Jesus' cry of agony on the cross was misinterpreted as a call for Elijah. "Art thou Elijah?" was the first question put to John the Baptist, and how John fulfilled Elijah's office as the forerunner of the Messiah was explained by Jesus. "Blessed are they that saw thee," says the writer of Ecclesiasticus, "for we shall surely live." The Jews regarded the translation of Elijah as a proof of man's immortality. For that reason, and also as the chief prophet, he appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. His work was taken up by Elisha, who received a "double portion" of his spirit—the amount of an eldest son's inheritance. He continued Elijah's mission; he was the guiding spirit in the conduct of the Syrian wars, and the final overthrow of the house of Omri. But his methods differed widely from those of his master. Elisha mixed with men and was seen at courts; he came not merely to denounce, but to encourage. His mission was not confined to any particular class, but his miraculous powers were at the service of all. Elijah is remote, austere, and even forbidding. Elisha is human, kindly and accessible. In this capacity he helped Jehoram, who had succeeded to the throne of Israel, during the wars with which his reign was occupied. Jehoram, in alliance with Jehoshaphat of Judah and the King of Edom,

*Malachi iv 5, 6.

*John i 21.

*Matt. xi 14.

*Cp. also Luke ix 54

2 Kings iii.

perhaps an unwilling ally, undertook an expedition to reduce the revolted Moabites to subjection. The heavy tribute of wool, imposed probably by Omri, had been discontinued, and refusal to pay tribute was tantamount in an Eastern empire to a declaration of revolt. Jehoshaphat again desired to consult a prophet, and Elisha came forward; as the army was threatened with a water famine, he bade them dig trenches; these were filled by water from underground sources, or from a distant rainstorm which the prophet had foreseen, and the morning sun striking the water gave it the appearance of blood. The Moabites, thinking that the allies were massacring one another, rushed upon the encampment, but were driven back in utter confusion and besieged in their capital, Kir-haraseth, while the land was ravaged. The Moabite king attempted a sortie, "to break through unto the King of Edom", and when his effort failed he sacrificed his eldest son to Chemosh on the wall in the sight of his enemies. In horror at the sight, or in fear that the god who had received so awful a sacrifice must surely help his worshippers, the allied armies abandoned the siege.

The inscription on the "Moabite stone" (see p. 167) shows that the revolt was a serious matter. Mesha had seized and fortified the towns on his northern frontier; "the men of Gad dwelled in the country of Ataroth from ancient times, and the King of Israel fortified Ataroth; I assaulted the wall and captivated it, and . . . I placed therein the men of Siran". The

*Num. xxxii 34.

inscription refers to the capture of other Gadite towns. Thus, though Kir-haraseth is only fifty miles from Jerusalem, the allies were obliged to attack from the south, and the help of Edom was therefore indispensable, if they were to make so long a circuit. The Moabite capital, now Kerak, is a natural fortress, but is commanded by some of the surrounding hills, from which it is separated by deep ravines; hence it was possible for the slingers to "go about it and smite it". Mesha may have been especially angry with the King of Edom for opening the way into his country; his sortie was apparently aimed at this king, and the prophet Amos condemns Moab for violating the bones of the King of Edom, and so outraging the most sacred sentiments of piety; hence it would seem that Mesha was able afterwards to overrun Edom. The war of the Moabites and Ammonites against Jehoshaphat, as related by the Chronicler, seems to have been waged after the retreat of the allies from Kir-haraseth. The allied attack was thus not entirely successful, though it checked the advance of Moab for the time.

*Amos ii 1.

2 Chron. xx.

It is impossible to discover any clue to the chronology of Elisha's life. The parallelism between the miracles of Elijah and Elisha is obvious: Elisha rebuked Jehoram as Elijah rebuked Ahab; Elisha increased the oil of the prophet's widow during famine as Elijah had increased that of the Sareptan widow; Elijah raised her son from the dead, and so Elisha raised the

2 Kings ii–vi.

son of the Shunammite; Elijah cursed the captains and their troops and they were destroyed, and so Elisha's curse proved the destruction of the children. This latter incident has aroused much difficulty in many minds. The cry "Go up, thou bald-head!" was perhaps raised in mockery of Elisha when he first assumed Elijah's mantle and position; Elijah's hair was probably long and shaggy, and the contrast between the ascetic of the desert and the prophet of society would be obvious. If the punishment recorded seems unnecessarily severe, we must remember that the standards of morality in the earlier books of the Old Testament are not those of the New, and that the story must be judged from the same point of view as the "treachery" of Jael towards Sisera in the book of Judges. Such incidents represent the sentiment of the time expressed in national tradition, and are not to be read as "examples of life" for us. The story of the Shunammite and her son is one of the most beautiful episodes in the Old Testament. Shunem was a village a little to the north of Jezreel, through which Elisha would naturally pass on his road to Carmel from Jezreel, or from Samaria, the capital and his usual place of residence. These journeys were perhaps undertaken in order to visit the various prophetic colleges of which Elisha was regarded as the head. Though the Shunammite was a wealthy woman, Elisha is obviously a revered guest; he is in the house but not of it, and communications are opened with his hostess through

*2 Kings iv 8.

his servant Gehazi, when necessary. Elisha sends for his hostess, and offers to use his influence to repay her care for his comfort. The Shunammite requires no appeal to the king or the captain of the host, for she suffers no oppression or wrong, and her own people can protect her. The promise of a son is received with some incredulity, but during the years that pass while the boy is growing up, the woman's feelings towards Elisha become those of complete trust; hence she turns to him in her loss. The boy suffers a sunstroke in the early part of a harvest day, when the oblique rays of the sun are most dangerous; the mother hastens to the prophet and will not leave him until he returns with her. Noteworthy is also the close of the incident: she has not a word of thanks to utter; she "bowed herself to the ground", overcome with the religious awe which a visible manifestation of God's power evokes. Elisha did not lose his interest in the woman. At a later date he gave her warning of a famine, and to escape it she spent seven years in Philistia. Upon her return, the name and fame of Elisha helped her to recover her land, which had been seized during her absence.

*Cp. Judges vi 22; xiii 22; Is. vi 5; Luke v 8.

2 Kings viii 1-6.

The story of Naaman's cure cannot be assigned to any special period of Elisha's life. The King of Israel, though not named, seems to have been Jehoram, and a period of peace between Israel and Syria must then have existed. Elisha does not leave his house to meet Naaman,

2 Kings v.

because he wishes him to learn that his cure is due to the God of Israel: the Syrian would be sure that to wash in Jordan was no cure for leprosy, otherwise there would have been no lepers in Israel. Hence his faith is tested by the apparent slight to his dignity and the apparently unnecessary journey from Samaria to the Jordan. When he has survived the test, thanks to the persuasion of his servants, the prophet's attitude changes, and he comes out to meet Naaman. He declines a gift lest he should spoil the effect of the lesson. Naaman's faith in Jehovah is not to be interpreted as belief that Jehovah was a universal God. Jehovah was to him only a territorial deity, though greater and worthier of worship than the gods of Syria. Hence he desires to carry away some of the holy soil to make an acceptable altar. He also asks that his inconsistency in the future formal worship of Rimmon may be pardoned. Gehazi's severe punishment is due not only to his deceit, but to the fact that he had destroyed the impression which Elisha wished to make by refusing a present—the impression that Jehovah alone, not the prophet, nor the Jordan, had healed the disease.

*1 Kings xx 23.

It was probably after the healing of Naaman that war broke out again between the Syrians and the Israelites. Marauding raids seem to have been of constant occurrence even during periods of diplomatic peace, and doubtless led to formal outbreaks of war from time to time. Elisha foretold the Syrian plans to

2 Kings vi 8–viii 20.

Jehoram, with such success as to lead Benhadad to suspect treachery among his own officers. When he discovered the truth, he sent a force to capture Elisha; they, however, were stricken with blindness and led to Samaria, where, at Elisha's injunction, they were well treated and allowed to return to their master. After an interval of peace the Syrian king resolved to open an attack with the whole of his forces, and besieged Samaria; the city was reduced to the direst straits, when four lepers, entering the Syrian camp in despair, discovered that the enemy had fled. Scouts were sent out, who confirmed the news, and the famine was relieved by the stores in the Syrian camp, as Elisha had foretold. The Syrian flight is said to have been caused by a sudden panic, due to a supposed attack by the Egyptians and the Hittites. (See additional note to Chapter II.)

*2 Kings v 2.

*2 Kings vi 23.

Elisha now appears in Syria; his name was naturally well known at Damascus; when he entered the district Benhadad was ill and sent his chief minister Hazael to ask Elisha whether he would recover. The prophet's answer implied that though the sickness would not be mortal, death would none the less come upon the king, and he fixed a meaning glance upon Hazael, who disclaimed all evil intentions, but none the less murdered his master on his return home.

2 Kings viii 7–24.

Meanwhile Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, had died, and was succeeded by his son Jehoram. The

alliance between Judah and Israel had been cemented by the marriage of Jehoram with Ahab's daughter Athaliah. Jehoram began his reign with the massacre of his brethren and several princes of Israel, to which act he may have been instigated by Athaliah. The chief event of his reign was the revolt of the Edomites, who deposed the Jewish governor and chose a king of their own. Jehoram invaded the country, but was surrounded by the Edomite forces and only escaped by making a sudden sally at night. Edom, which had been conquered by David but had recovered its independence under Solomon, seems to have been again subject to Judah until the time of this revolt, which also provided Libnah with a similar opportunity, and Jehoram lost control of this strong city lying between the mountains of Judah and the Mediterranean coast. Philistine and Arab movements may also have helped Libnah to assert its independence. The religious degradation which Jehoram introduced was doubtless fostered by Athaliah. Elijah sent a letter of rebuke to the King of Judah, the only occasion upon which the prophet is mentioned in connection with the southern kingdom. Jehoram died unlamented by his subjects, and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah.

2 Chron. xxi 1–20.

*2 Sam. viii 14; 1 Kings xxii 47.

*Josh. x 29–31.

The alliance between Israel and Judah was renewed. Ahaziah was entirely under his mother's influence, and joined Jehoram of Israel in an attack upon the Syrians

2 Kings viii 25–29.
2 Chron. xxii 1–6.

near Ramoth-Gilead, where Ahab had lost his life. The town was in the hands of the Israelites, but was menaced by the Syrians. The King of Israel was wounded in the fighting, and retired to Jezreel to recover, where he received a visit from Ahaziah. Ramoth-Gilead was meanwhile left in charge of the Israelite commander-in-chief, Jehu.

The time had arrived when Elisha was to perform the divine commission to Elijah: the overthrow of the Baal worship, and the extirpation of Phœnician influence from the land. The completion of this task implied the destruction of the house of Omri. It was a reactionary conservative revolution for which Elijah had prepared the way, and which Elisha was enabled to accomplish, as before mentioned, with the support of two strong influences. The first of these was the power of the prophetic guilds or colleges; here Elisha found his closest followers, and many of his miracles were performed in the interest of these guilds. They were usually situated near some ancient sanctuary, such as Bethel or Gilgal, and were closely connected with the priests of Jehovah. We first hear of them in the history of Samuel and Saul; united by ties of religious conviction amounting to fanaticism in their intensity, and finding an outlet in strange excesses, their profession tended to become a trade, and we find the later prophets, Amos and Isaiah, in continual antagonism with the perambulating oracle-mongers of their age. It was shortly after

2 Kings ix, x.

*1 Sam. x 5, 10.

Jehu's revolution that their degeneracy seems to have begun; at the present moment their earnestness and their hold upon the people proved a valuable support to Elisha. One of them ("this mad fellow") was sent by the prophet to anoint Jehu at Ramoth-Gilead and to begin the revolution. The movement was also supported by the Rechabites or Nazirites; we find Jehu obviously anxious to do honour to their leader, Jehonadab. He, we learn, forbade his descendants to drink wine or to live a settled life in cities; they were to pursue a nomadic life. Vine culture demands a settled and sedentary life, and is therefore foreign to the true nomad; wine was also regarded as a gift of the Baalim, and drinking wine was part of their worship. Hence the Rechabites represent the cause of ancient simplicity of life against Canaanite or Phœnician luxury, and their support again marks Jehu's revolution as conservative and reactionary.

*2 Kings x 15 ff.

*Jer. xxxv 6, 7.

Though Jehoram was professedly staying at Jezreel to recover from his wounds, he was none the less able to entertain Ahaziah and to leave the town in his chariot to meet Jehu. Probably the indifference or cowardice which he thus showed in the face of the danger which threatened his country made Jehu's task the easier and inclined the army to espouse his cause. The sight of the commander-in-chief driving furiously with a small force, and the failure of the messengers to return, naturally induced the king to leave the town that he might be the first

to learn some important news from Ramoth-Gilead. The two kings were thus surprised and killed, and Jezebel was flung from a window at Jehu's bidding. Jehu then wrote a letter to the king's government in Samaria challenging any resistance to himself. It was assumed in Samaria that Jehu had overcome the kings with an army at his back; the rapidity of his action and his policy in avoiding any immediate advance upon Samaria, thus secured to Jehu the obedience of the capital town. The king's sons were killed, and the sight of their heads at the gate of Jezreel showed the inhabitants that Samaria had submitted to him, and warned them that they could do no less. The slaughter of Ahaziah's kindred and the massacre of the Baal worshippers completed the revolution. The house of Omri was swept away.

From a political point of view the revolution was a retrograde movement. The house of Omri had been far from unsuccessful; the house of Jehu proved to be a much weaker dynasty. Nor was Jehu's revolution successful from a religious point of view; the worship of Jehovah was, indeed, never again attacked by the introduction of a foreign religion. But Jehu used the prophet's ideals to serve his own ambition; if Baal was cast out, the true worship of Jehovah was not enforced. Religious decadence, formalism and corruption advanced rapidly; the mechanical theory, that the performance of fast and feast was enough to secure the divine favour, went unquestioned. Meanwhile the Syrian wars destroyed the strength of the country,

and the state of the yeoman and peasant class, the best hope of Israel, became steadily more desperate. Worse than all was the destruction of the principle of dynastic succession, which seemed to have been gaining ground. There was little hope that Israel could consolidate her power if no king could feel secure upon his throne. From this point of view Hosea condemns the revolution which Elisha had supported. The Lord will "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu". The contradiction in the prophetic ideals is quite explicable. Elisha looked forward and saw a purified and regenerate nation restored to its early simplicity of life by the extirpation of foreign worships and foreign civilization. Hosea looked back, and, seeking causes for the corruption of the kingdom, he saw the godless principle of anarchy, which destroyed all possibility of a united Israel serving one God in unity of purpose. "They have made kings, but not by Me; they have made princes, and I knew it not."

*Hos. i 4; vii 7.

*Hos. viii 4.

Note 1. The Chronology of the Books of Kings and Chronicles

A full discussion of this difficult subject is impossible here. But it is worth while to examine the nature of the difficulties and of the solutions at our disposal. In the first place, the chronology is sometimes self-contradictory. In 2 Kings i 17 the accession of Jehoram of Israel is dated as occurring in the second year of Jehoram of Judah, but in the first verse of the following chapter the event is placed in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat of Judah. Again, in 2 Kings viii 16 we are told that Jehoram of Judah began to reign in the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel. The only possible solution of these incon-

sistencies is to suppose that Jehoram and Jehoshaphat occupied the throne of Judah conjointly for some seven or eight years, and that the last reference refers to Jehoram's independent reign after his father's death. We have no evidence to support the idea of a co-regency; nor is it likely that a vigorous ruler and an ardent servant of Jehovah, as Jehoshaphat was, would have taken so weak a prince as Jehoram for his co-regent.

When we are able to compare the Biblical chronology with dates established by foreign history, similar difficulties are apparent. Ahab was present at the battle of Karkar, in the sixth year of Shalmaneser's reign over Assyria: Shalmaneser received the tribute of Jehu in the eighteenth year of his reign. Within twelve years we have therefore to find room for the two reigns which separated Ahab and Jehu. This interval is given by the Biblical chronology as fourteen years. Even if we assume that the Hebrew writer counted fractions of years as full years, we are obliged to place the battle of Karkar in the year of Ahab's death, and Jehu's tribute in the year of his revolt; the former supposition, at least, is distinctly improbable.

Again, if the two lines of chronology for the northern and southern kingdoms are compared down to the fall of Samaria, we find that the Judæan line is some twenty years longer than the Israelite line. Attempts have been made to overcome this difficulty by assuming an interregnum after the death of Jeroboam II, and a period of anarchy later on. But the fact is that the early Hebrews do not seem to have possessed a precise system of chronology. Amos, for instance, does not date his prophecy by the regnal year of King Uzziah, but says that it was "two years before the earthquake". The priests may have possessed a system. In the history of Judah events referring to the Temple are dated by regnal years (2 Kings xii 6, and the like). But for general affairs there was no system, and the occurrence of round numbers, such as forty and its multiples, is natural.

For exact chronology, therefore, we are obliged to depend upon outside help, and much has been provided by the Assyrian records. The Assyrians were astronomers, and had learned to keep a precise record of years. Each year was named after a

certain official, like the Archon Eponymus at Athens. The list of these eponyms has been preserved, with notes of expeditions and other events after each name. The latter part of this so-called Eponym Canon overlaps the Canon of Ptolemy, one of the chief sources for determining ancient chronology; and we are thus able to transpose the Assyrian dates into terms of the Christian era. The accuracy of the Assyrian chronology has been verified by numerous texts, and the dates given in this book will be only those which can be controlled by Assyrian or some other external evidence.

Note 2. 1 Kings xxii 11.—The making of the horns of iron by Zedekiah is one of the symbolical actions of which many instances may be found in the lives of the prophets. They are a kind of pledge for the truth of the prophecy, given in visible form, by which the extent of fulfilment can afterwards be tested. Other instances will be found in 1 Kings xi 30; Is. viii 3; xx 3; Ezek. iv 3; xii 6, 11; xxiv 24, 27.

CHAPTER IV

The House of Jehu

Phœnician influence remained predominant in Judah, where Jehu did not venture to interfere; he was fully occupied with the task of establishing his own power and of satisfying the Assyrians. Upon Ahaziah's death Athaliah destroyed all the seed royal and seized the throne. Jehosheba, however, the half-sister of Ahaziah, rescued Joash, the son of Ahaziah, who was then a babe in arms, and hid him in the Temple, where he was brought up. As the wife of Jehoiada, the priest, she was able to arrange this matter without difficulty.

2 Kings xi, xii.
2 Chron. xxii 10–12; xxiii 1–16; xxiv 1–27.

At first sight it is a surprising fact that Judah should have permitted this, the only interregnum in her history, to continue even for six years. The successful revolution in favour of Jehovah, which Jehu had led in the north, must have stirred the forces of conservatism in the south, and there is no doubt that the priestly rising which overthrew Athaliah would have been begun at an early date had opportunity offered. But Athaliah was obviously, like Jezebel, a strong character, and was supported by a body of foreign troops, called the Carians (a famous mercenary people), until they were won over by Jehoiada. Though she had introduced the worship of Baal, she had also permitted that of Jehovah to continue and had thus avoided the prejudice that a suppression of the Temple services would have caused. But the point of capital importance in the whole story is the fact that the struggle was one of the country people against the city. It was "the people of the land" who destroyed the house of Baal, as opposed to "the people" in general who became a party to the new covenant; it was "the people of the land" who rejoiced, while "the city was quiet". Athaliah was supported by a native party within Jerusalem; the policy of her family made for general culture, for wealth gained by commerce, and therefore emphasized city life as more important than agricultural life. In the age of Isaiah we shall observe the growth of city factions within Jerusalem favouring a policy of foreign interference,

*2 Kings xi 4, R.V.

*2 Kings xi 17, 18, 20.

and ready to aggrandize the city at the expense of the country. We now observe the first instance of city cosmopolitanism supporting the cause of foreign commerce and culture against the conservatives of the country districts, who preferred to maintain their old exclusive habits of life.

Though the revolt was carefully engineered, the details are by no means easy to follow in the Biblical text. The most generally accepted attempt to harmonize the accounts given by the books of Kings and Chronicles is as follows:—Jehoiada's plan was to produce the six-year-old Joash in the Temple, to crown him as king, and to put Athaliah to death. One point was essential to secure the success of the attempt—the safety of Joash when Athaliah and her party knew that he was alive, and the prevention of an attack by any force under Athaliah's command. For this purpose the high priest gained the adherence of the captains of the soldiery, who guarded both the palace and the Temple, and chose a Sabbath day for the attempt. The Temple was in a separate court adjoining the royal residence, and formed part of the same block of buildings. The guard was organized in three divisions, as in the time of David. During the week two companies were on duty in the palace, and one in the Temple; this arrangement was reversed upon the Sabbath, when the number of visitors to the Temple was greatest. Jehoiada arranged to produce Joash at the moment when the two divisions from the palace were changing quarters with the one division at the

*2 Kings xi 9.

Temple, when, that is, the whole bodyguard was momentarily in one spot, and the palace was left unguarded. Thus Athaliah's suspicions were not aroused, and the ceremony of coronation was concluded before she learned what was on foot. The united guard and the presence of Jehoiada's supporters from the country, who naturally came in on the Sabbath, prevented any opposition. The queen was slain and the city submitted.

During the early years of the young king's reign the influence of Jehoiada was paramount. The covenant between Jehovah and the people was renewed, the house of Baal was destroyed and the Temple services restored and reorganized. The buildings had now been standing for at least a century, and repairs were necessitated as much by the ravages of time as by the depredations of Athaliah and her family. The young king therefore ordered the priests to expend their revenues upon the work of repair. These revenues, apart from offerings in kind, were derived from a threefold source: assessments made upon individuals for religious purposes, such as vows; freewill offerings, appropriated to no special purpose; and money given for the provision of vessels and utensils for the Temple services. The priests and Levites were ordered to increase these contributions by going themselves through the country of Judah to collect from their acquaintances. The priests, however, neglected the repair of the building, and when the king reached the age of twenty-three, he proposed a

*2 Kings xi 18.

*2 Kings xii 4.
*Lev. xxvii 2–8.

new scheme. Public offerings were deposited in a chest beside the altar; a general appeal for contributions was made to the people, and a proper account was kept of the money by the royal scribe, who paid it out to the contractors in charge of the work of restoration. The new arrangement proved successful; the givers saw that a united effort was being made, and that the money would be strictly accounted for and properly expended. It was used only for the work of repair, and not for providing vessels or ornaments; meanwhile the priests were supported by "the trespass money and sin money", payments made for omissions in ritual and to provide offerings for atonement of individual sins.

*Lev. v.

The interesting point in this affair is the part taken by the king. His authority still extends over the Temple and its revenues, in which the priests had no vested interest as yet. We find Joash buying off the Syrian invaders at a later date with the Temple treasures, which included the gifts of earlier kings, as well as his own funds. The constant use of the Temple treasures for this purpose—this is the third instance—suggests that, as in other cases, the Temple was also a bank, where many individuals deposited stores of precious metal. If the king was forced to draw upon these, he either replaced them or gave the depositors an equivalent value in landed property. In any case, the funds must have been replaced with comparative rapidity, as they were usually adequate when required for

*2 Kings xii 17, 18.

*1 Kings xiv 26; xv 18.

THE "BLACK OBELISK" OF SHALMANESER II

With scenes representing the payment of tribute by the kings whom he had conquered. The second series from the top, going round the four sides of the monolith, represents the payment of tribute by Jehu.

special purposes; hence we may infer the fact that the Temple was an important influence in the national life and commanded the general confidence for purposes other than purely religious.

After the death of Jehoiada, the high priest, Joash came under the influence of the city party and fell away to idolatry. He was rebuked by prophets, including Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to death at the king's command. The Chronicler, who alone gives these details, regards the Syrian invasion as the king's punishment. The Syrians captured Gath, though whether the town then belonged to the Philistines or to Judah is not clear; they also overran Judah and defeated the king's forces. These disasters led to a conspiracy against Joash, who was slain upon his sickbed. He was succeeded by his son, Amaziah, an obvious proof that the conspiracy was directed against Joash personally, not against his dynasty. The strength of the house of David in Judah again forms a strong contrast to the dynastic instability of the northern kingdom.

Meanwhile Jehu had died, and the rule of the northern kingdom passed to his son Jehoahaz. The Biblical narrative is occupied only with the details of his religious revolution, and we learn nothing more of foreign affairs than the fact that the Syrians conquered Gilead and all transjordanic Israel, with circumstances of barbarity which lived long in the minds of the Israelites. Hazael, at Damascus, was now at the height of his power,

2 Kings xiii 3.

*Amos i 3, 13.

and though Jehu's policy bore fruit in the reign of his successor, he was unable to check the Syrian advance during his own lifetime. What that policy was we may learn from the Assyrian inscriptions. We have already seen that Ahab joined the Syrians in alliance against Shalmaneser II; we find that Jehu paid tribute to the same king in 842 B.C. This payment was made upon the defeat of Hazael by the Assyrians, which is related by Shalmaneser's inscription as follows: "In my eighteenth year, I crossed the Euphrates for the sixteenth time. Haza-îlu (Hazael) . . . trusted to the might of his troops, and called his troops together in great number. Saniru, the peak of a mountain which is before Lebanon, he made his stronghold. I fought with him, I accomplished his defeat; sixteen hundred of his fighting men I slew with the sword; eleven hundred and twenty-one of his chariots, four hundred and seventy of his horses, with his camp, I captured. He fled to save his life; I set out after him. I besieged him in Dimasqu (Damascus), his royal city. I cut down his orchards . . . Untold spoil I carried away . . . In those days I received the tribute of the Tyrians, Zidonians, and of Yaua (Jehu), son of Humri (Omri)." The same campaign is described on the Black Obelisk, now in the British Museum, where a bas-relief shows Jehu's messengers bringing their tribute to the Assyrians. "The tribute of Yaua, son of Humri; silver, gold, a golden cup, golden vases, golden vessels, golden buckets, lead, a staff for the hand of the king, and sceptres, I received."

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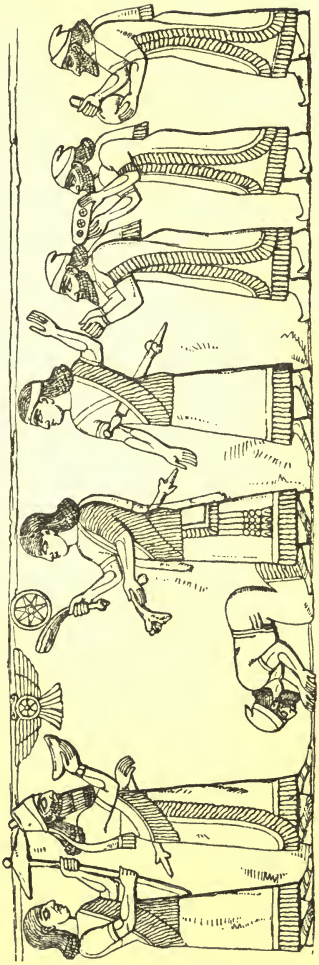
DETAIL FROM THE "BLACK OBELISK"

The upper register represents the tribute of Jehu; the lower, tribute from the land of Musri.

The mention of Jehu as the son of Omri is a natural error. Omri had made so strong an impression on the surrounding peoples that Palestine was known to them as the land of Omri, and it is not to be expected that the remote Assyrian king would be fully informed of the change of dynasty that had taken place in a petty kingdom far from his court. Jehu had probably come to the conclusion that his best prospect of checking the Syrian aggression was to acknowledge the suzerainty of Assyria; in any case, Hazael appears on this occasion as completely isolated, whereas in previous years the Syrians had headed confederacies against the Assyrians. In 839 B.C. Shalmaneser again attacked Hazael, and received tribute from Tyre and Sidon, but Jehu's name does not appear in the list of tributaries on



Detail from the Black Obelisk: Israelites before Shalmaneser

this occasion, for what reason we cannot say. When the repeated attacks of the Assyrians had broken the power of Damascus, Israel obtained a short respite and was able to recover something of her former power during the interval which elapsed before the Assyrians began their final series of movements to the shore of the Mediterranean.

Shalmaneser died in 825 B.C., and his son, Samsi-Addu III (825–812 B.C.) made no attack upon Syria. His successor, Adad-nirari (812–783 B.C.), conducted a campaign against Syria, probably in 803 B.C., which ended in the subjugation of Damascus. The Assyrian monarch claims to have conquered the whole of Palestine: "the land of Tyre, the land of Sidon, the land of Omri, the land of Palestine (Philistia), as far as the great sea of the setting of the sun (the Mediterranean), I caused to submit to my feet. I fixed tax and tribute upon them." The inscription then states that Damascus was besieged, and that Mari'u the king, who had presumably succeeded Benhadad III, the son of Hazael, surrendered and did homage to the Assyrian in Damascus. Probably the Israelites submitted to the Assyrians and paid them tribute to secure their intervention; the Assyrian is thus the "saviour", or deliverer, whose action enabled the Israelites to resume undisturbed occupation of the country districts. The relief came none too soon, for the Syrian wars had reduced the country to terrible weakness. Joash, the son and successor of Jehoahaz, was soon able

2 Kings xiii 2–25.

*2 Kings xiii 5.

*2 Kings xiii 7.

to take the offensive and defeat the shattered power of Damascus. The success was foretold by Elisha upon his deathbed, who made the king perform certain symbolical acts in token of victory, one directing the king to go eastward against the enemy and one to test his zeal and constancy. The invasion which became the occasion of the last miracle connected with Elisha's name was possibly delivered by the Moabites as allies of the Syrian power.

*2 Kings xiii 20, 21.

The difficulty in the way of reconciling the Biblical and Assyrian accounts of these affairs is increased by the fragmentary and disconnected form of both narratives. The writer of Kings states that Joash won his victories over Benhadad III, whereas the Assyrian king claims to have defeated a Syrian ruler of another name. In any case, the general fact is clear, that the Assyrian advance enabled Israel to recover some temporary power and prosperity. The great Eastern empires, until the time of Darius, were mere congeries of kingdoms. The only obligations incumbent upon a subjugated kingdom were the payment of tribute and the provision of free passage for the conqueror's troops through or into the country. The withholding of tribute was tantamount to a declaration of revolt. There was often little or no attempt to centralize the government or to supervise the action of outlying states. Hence, if the Assyrian conqueror was detained beyond the Euphrates, by domestic affairs or revolts nearer home, he was unable to enforce his authority over his distant

conquests, which were left almost entirely to their own devices. The necessity for a constant series of campaigns against Syria is thus explicable. The next Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III, is found at Damascus in 773 B.C.; but domestic affairs, pestilence, and revolts entirely occupied the two following Assyrian kings, and Western Syria was left to itself until the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III, which began in 745 B.C.

Amaziah had been raised to the throne of Judah by the conspirators who murdered his father. Not until the kingdom was firmly established in his grasp did he venture to punish them. It is noteworthy that the conspirators did not attempt to introduce any dynastic change, though they might have expected that the son would take vengeance upon them. The fact is also noted that Amaziah did not slay the children of the murderers, and his action is regarded as obedience to the law of Deuteronomy. Though this law was codified when the author of the book of Kings compiled his narrative, it almost certainly did not so exist in the time of Amaziah, and the king's action is proof of a rising morality which is noted by the historian as an approximation to the high standard of Deuteronomy, but may have been inspired by more secular considerations. The old theory that the children of criminals could and should be put to death for their fathers' crimes may have come to seem unnecessarily harsh and cruel (see the appendix to this chapter). Amaziah also made a successful

2 Kings xiv 1–22.
2 Chron. xxv.

*Deut. xxiv 16.

expedition against the Edomites; he hired mercenaries from Israel for a hundred talents, but sent them home at the bidding of a prophet who told him that "the Lord was not with Israel". The Israelites withdrew in wrath, and Amaziah defeated the Edomites in the Valley of Salt on the border of their territory, south of the Dead Sea. Apparently the Edomites had not been reduced to subjection since their revolt during the reign of Joram. The citadel which Amaziah captured was probably some fortress which commanded the trade route to the Red Sea. Amaziah may have undertaken the expedition to reopen this road, as his successor held and fortified the town of Elath.

*2 Kings viii 20–22.

Amaziah then sent a challenge to Joash, the King of Israel. The motive for this apparently wanton proceeding is to be found in the Chronicler's account, who states that the dismissed mercenaries ravaged the northern cities of Judah on their way home. Joash replied with a contemptuous answer in the form of an apologue, but Amaziah would not listen to reason, and was defeated and captured at Beth-shemesh. Joash advanced upon Jerusalem, broke down the northern wall of the city, and carried away the spoils of the Temple and the palace. Probably Amaziah was allowed to remain in Jerusalem as a vassal king. The people seem to have chafed under this state of things, and after the death of Joash a conspiracy was formed against Amaziah, who fled to Lachish for security. There, however, he was killed, and

his son Azariah or Uzziah was made king. Once again the dynasty of David survived the throes of a revolution.

The reign of Jeroboam II, who succeeded Joash upon the throne of Israel, is very briefly dismissed by the writer of the book of Kings, who states, however, that he reconquered Hamath and Damascus. The weakness of Syria provided him with his opportunity, while Assyria was occupied with domestic struggles. The old boundaries of the land were restored, and the Moabites were defeated. Under Jeroboam's long reign the kingdom recovered its external prosperity, and wealth and luxury increased. If we learn little from the book of Kings, much light is thrown upon the social and religious life of Israel by the utterances of the prophets Amos and Hosea. Their denunciations of the evils around them and their hopes for the future can only be understood by first considering the religious situation as they found it.

2 Kings xiv 23-29.

*Amos vi 14.

The religious revolution conducted by Elisha and Jehu had been a conservative movement, and the forms under which Jehovah was worshipped were therefore retained in their traditional style. The golden calves, the Ashera or sacred pole and the numerous sanctuaries remained untouched. These symbols, while satisfying the desire for material objects of worship, tended to degrade the idea of the true God, and for that reason are condemned by the writers of Kings and Chronicles. In an age when the family, tribe or nation was the

unit, and not the individual, the sanctuaries were necessary to the continuance of religious life, however dangerous to its purity. The idea expressed by Hosea that captives in Egypt and Assyria cannot worship Jehovah, because they are cut off from their altars in an unclean and foreign land, will show how deeply the sense of the altar as indispensable to communication with Jehovah was ingrained. As these sanctuaries became not only religious but commercial centres, the priests had every interest in maintaining their popularity and attractiveness. The sacred feasts became occasions of merrymaking, drunkenness, or worse. Priesthood, like prophecy, became a mere profession, and the judicial functions of the priests (see p. 151) were perverted to suit the wishes of the aristocracy. The expiation for wrongdoing could be commuted for a monetary payment instead of sacrifice, and the sins of the people thus became a source of income to the priests. The theory naturally found acceptance among the people, that while the performance of pilgrimage and other ritual acts was of importance to secure the goodwill of Jehovah, the meaning and intention of such acts, or the purity of their performer, were of no significance whatever. While the popular theology thus tended to degrade the people, the aristocracy were inclined to oppress them. A central government, when maintained for any length of time, calls into being a bureaucracy or official class, which is joined by men of wealth or high

*Hos. ix 4.

*Amos vii 17.

*Hos. iv 11, 14.

*2 Kings xii 16.

birth and tends to regard its own aggrandizement as the most important result of government. The advantages derived from the revival of trade and property under Jeroboam II benefited the upper classes almost exclusively. The people had been broken by the long Syrian wars, and the small yeoman, the real strength of the country, was disappearing. The extremes of wealth and poverty were becoming more marked, and the poor could find no means of defence against the oppression of the rich, who perverted justice and used fraud and violence in every form to secure their own advantage. The religion which should have been the poor man's chief support had become one of the chief instruments for his oppression.

*Amos ii 6, 7; viii 6, &c.

At such times the function of the true prophet was to rouse the nation, if possible, to a sense of its unworthiness and degradation, and Amos first comes forward as a critic of his age. He was no professional prophet. A shepherd and tiller of the soil, he left his occupation at Tekoa in Judah, to travel as far as Bethel in Israel, to utter his prophecy and return. This visit, when he came into collision with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, is the one event of his life. He was roused to prophecy by the idea that the destruction of the nation was imminent. The extent of his political view was remarkable; the Nile, and Calneh in Babylonia are alike known to him. He obviously had Assyria in his mind as the cause of the approach-

*Amos vii 14.

*Amos viii 8; ix 5; vi 2.

ing doom, though he did not mention it by name. In fact, Amos was a close observer both of the social and political vicissitudes of the nation. The luxury of the aristocrats in Samaria, the sensuality of their wives, the rapacity of the rich who tyrannized over the poor, are as clear to him as the fact that Jeroboam was only prosperous and successful because Assyria's hands were tied by domestic troubles. These were connected by the Assyrians themselves with the eclipse of the sun, to which Amos refers, and which took place on June 15, 763 B.C.

*Amos vi 3 ff.
" iv 1 ff.
" iii 6 ff.

*Amos viii 9.

Amos' faith in Jehovah is based upon the belief that He was Lord of the whole earth, and not merely the local god of Palestine. Jehovah has created Assyria for a purpose, and the nature of this purpose is indicated by the sins both of Israel and of the surrounding tribes; the doom is pronounced upon all—Syria, Philistia, Phœnicia, Edom, Ammon and Moab, as well as Judah and Israel. Amos thus has a wider conception of the idea of sin than was common among his contemporaries: these peoples are condemned not for disregarding Jehovah, whom they did not know, but for breaking the laws of universal morality — Syria and Ammon for inhumanity to the Gileadites, Phœnicia and Philistia for the slave trade. Israel is judged and condemned by the same law, and cannot plead its assiduous performance of the ritual worship of Jehovah as a reason for

*Amos iv 3; ix 7.

*Amos i, ii.

*Amos ix 7; v 21.

exemption from punishment. In this matter Jehovah regards Israel and the remote Cushites as equal.

But at the same time Israel is in a special position: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth". Israel has not only broken laws, but has refused to listen to personal explanations of them and their meaning. There is but one remedy; offerings and pilgrimages are useless, and the mechanical performance of ritual is futile and unimportant. The contractual theory of religion, that the performance of worship and sacrifice by the people demands the gift of prosperity from the god, is a delusion. God requires a reasoning, not an unthinking service. Thus Israel's prayer has been turned to sin by her own fault, and the prophet has no hope that the doom will be averted. The purpose of the punishment will be to sift out the evil elements; then Jehovah will rebuild Israel upon a new foundation.

*Amos iii 2, 7.

*Amos v 5, 6.
Amos v 21 ff.

*Amos ix 9.

The prophecy of Amos falls within the reign of Jeroboam II. Hosea, the last prophet of Ephraim, began his work in the same reign, and continued it during the period of anarchy which followed the extinction of the house of Jehu. But as he saw something of that which Amos foresaw, and as the contrast of his teaching with that of Amos is instructive, it will be convenient to consider his prophetic work at this point. Unlike Amos, who criticized Israel from an outside standpoint, Hosea was a native of the country; his life was bound up

with that of his nation and he prophesies as a patriot. Amos sternly denounces; Hosea reproves and laments. Amos is self-controlled; Hosea is overcome with grief and anguish. Like Amos he was naturally in opposition to the professional priests and prophets, but he is a man of sympathy. Amos is inspired by the idea of man's duty towards God; Hosea's ideal is the union of man to God by the ties of love and kindness. Hence while Amos criticizes Israel as a state, Hosea prefers to regard his nation as an individual; Ephraim is Jehovah's son or spouse, and filial or wifely obedience is required by Jehovah. Hosea's life was deeply coloured by the tragedy of his wife's unfaithfulness, and his domestic sorrows provide him with allegories to express the ideal relationship of Jehovah towards His people.

*Hos. xi 8.

*Hos. ix 8.

*Hos. iv 1; xi 4; xii 6.

*Hos. xi 1; i 2; ii 13; xiii 13.

Very different, therefore, are his hopes for the future of his people. We have already referred to his condemnation of Jehu's revolt; godless anarchy seems to be the guiding principle of Ephraim; a return to dynastic stability under the guidance of Jehovah is the remedy. Jehu's treachery was but one stage in the defection from the house of David, the original sin. Idolatry and political disunion go hand in hand. Amos regarded the captivity as a sifting of the good from the bad; Hosea cannot distinguish one member of his nation from another; all have sinned and must repent as one man. Repentance will produce a break with the past and

*Hos. viii 14; iii 5; xiii 10.

*Hos. iv 18; xiv 7.

restoration will follow. But while Amos hints that the nation may rise again upon a basis of military power, this prospect has no attraction for Hosea; he sees only a purified Israel, cherished by Jehovah, and gives no detailed picture of her redeemed state.

The long and prosperous reign of Uzziah seems to have coincided pretty nearly with that of Jeroboam II; the chronology of the book of Kings is somewhat confused at this point. Uzziah's policy was first directed to securing the southern trade routes; the Red Sea port of Elath was already in his hands, as Amaziah had conquered it. He fought against the Philistines and the nomad tribes on the south, and built towers, to keep the roads open. He also dug wells or cisterns, and encouraged agriculture and cattle-breeding. Uzziah further devoted much attention to the defences of Jerusalem and the organization of the army. He added towers to the walls of Jerusalem, and the expression of the Chronicler would seem to show that he improved the northern defences of the city by imitating the Assyrian methods of fortification. He built towers "at the turning of the wall": the weak point in the defences of Jerusalem was the northern wall, which had been broken down when Amaziah was defeated. Uzziah now abandoned the straight line of wall, and built up a series of angles with projecting towers, so that archers could take an attacking force in flank at any point. The work seems to have been well done, for after his reign even the Assyrians were unable to storm

2 Kings xv 1-7.
2 Chron. xxvi.

*2 Chron. xxvi 9.

the place. Uzziah is said to have placed engines upon the wall to shoot stones and arrows. He also equipped and armed a large army.

Uzziah's reign was cut short by an attack of leprosy, which was sent upon him, according to the Chronicler, because he attempted to usurp the functions of the priests. The event probably marks a step in the struggle by which the priests strove to secure a monopoly of religious functions for themselves. Uzziah was then obliged to live apart, and his son Jotham acted as regent for the rest of his reign. The general activity in commerce, agriculture and building which Uzziah's energies indicate is confirmed by the hints to be found in the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Israel and Judah were at peace, and commanded between them the trade routes from Elath to Phœnicia and Damascus. This influx of commercial life brought many strangers into the country, and Jerusalem became steadily more cosmopolitan. *Is. ii 6. The change produced inevitable evils; the growing town life and the necessity for hands to work the caravan trade attracted the country folk to the cities; when times were bad, the mendicant classes were swelled by the unemployed, while agriculture decayed and the country became less self-supporting. The small yeoman, who had provided material for the army, began to disappear, and military deficiencies were supplied by the use of mercenary troops. At the same time the rich traders spent their wealth in the pursuit of luxury. They had their summer and winter

*Is. iii 16–23, and passim; Amos. Is. v 8; Mic. ii 2, 9.

houses, their "houses of ivory"; their country estates were formed by the amalgamation of small holdings, the owners of which had disappeared in the Syrian raids or in the vortex of town life, or were expropriated by perverting justice; corrupt judges favoured the land-grabber against the poor holder in return for a share of the spoils. The evils resulting from the accumulation of wealth in a few hands, and from the wide contrast between the extremes of luxury and poverty, first became intense in Judah under the rule of Uzziah. At the same time, as has been already pointed out, though similar social evils were rife both in the northern and southern kingdom, Judah possessed elements of stability which were not to be found in Israel. The kings of Israel found themselves at the head of a confederacy of tribes, and their efforts were directed to the formation of a centralized and absolutist government, and to breaking down the old tribal distinctions and jealousies which seemed to make for disunion. This process had been begun by Solomon, and had been rather helped than hindered by the wars under which the kingdom had suffered; but the result was to replace tribal jealousy by class prejudice, and to produce an irreparable breach between the court aristocracy and the mass of the people. Judah had been treated with special favour by Solomon, and after the disruption was practically a single tribe. Hence the political problems which troubled Israel were absent in Judah, and, apart from a certain opposition between the city and the

*Is. i 23; iii 14, 15; xxix 21.

country, there was no movement to disturb the continuance of the established dynasty. Until the rise of commerce and the influx of wealth under Uzziah, there was no influence likely to affect the usual course of government and the regular administration of justice. The throne of David retained a high reputation for "justice and mercy" until Isaiah's time. A long period of conservative government thus fostered loyalty and patriotism, and a state erected upon such a basis can survive many shocks and vicissitudes of fortune.

*Is. i 21.

The old religious usages seem to have been retained with equal conservatism. From the time when the worship of Baal was rooted out under Joash to the time of Hezekiah's reforms there is no record of any special change. The high places and local sanctuaries, the Asheras, were frequented, and the worship of the brazen serpent seems to have been extremely ancient. But the licentiousness and debauchery connected with religious observances in the north, to which Amos and Hosea refer, are not apparent in Judah. The greater poverty in the country districts implied greater simplicity of life. Superstitious belief in wizards, diviners, and magicians seems to have been prevalent, and Philistia is represented as the special source whence their practices were derived.

*Is. i 29; ii 8 Mic. v 14.

*Is. viii 19; xxix 4; ii 6. Cp. 1 Sam. vi 2. 2 Kings i 2.

Jeroboam II was succeeded by his son Zachariah, who had reigned only six months when he

was killed by a conspirator, Shallum, who apparently headed a popular rising against him. Thus the house of Jehu came to an end, and the northern kingdom entered upon its death struggle.

2 Kings xv 8–12.

Note to 2 Kings xiv 6.—Previous cases in which a whole family has suffered for the guilt or supposed guilt of one member will be found in Josh. vii 24 ff.; 2 Sam. xxi 1 ff.; 2 Kings ix 25. There is no doubt that the suffering of innocent members of a family for the guilt of one was regarded as a punishment upon them. Immoral as the idea of "vicarious punishment" may seem to us, it was common among early nations and tribes. The necessity of corporate action for self-defence suppressed all individualistic ideas. No member of a tribe could live for himself alone; whatever he did might affect the whole tribe, and the credit or guilt of his action was corporate, and, as it were, contagious. (Cp. 1 Sam. xiv 36–44.) Hence also the importance attached to a father's blessing under the patriarchs, when tribal life was closest. The idea, therefore, that guilt could descend over several generations was of natural growth, and was fostered by a misapprehension of the second commandment. "Visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children" may imply either that the children suffer for their fathers' sins—a natural and common experience; or that they are judicially punished for them—an impossible idea, if the nature and meaning of punishment is understood. Punishment implies that the sufferer acknowledges his guilt and also the justice of his judge, and no one can do this in the case of acts which he has not committed. The words "unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" explain the true meaning; those who "hate", place themselves in continuity with their fathers' sins, approve them, and are so far guilty of them. It was left for Ezekiel, in the famous eighteenth chapter of his prophecy, to declare the true distinction between punishment and suffering; but Amaziah's action on this occasion is an interesting anticipation of Ezekiel's teaching. The idea persisted long among the Jews. See Luke xiii 1–5; John ix 1–3;

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TIGLATH-PILESER III IN HIS CHARIOT

Luke xi 47–57. Cp. Ps. lxxix 8 (read "the iniquities of our forefathers"). For the similar ideas expressed in Greek tragedy, see Prof. S. H. Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius.*

CHAPTER V

The Death of Israel

The hour of destruction foreseen by Amos and Hosea was rapidly approaching. Assyria now had a competent monarch upon the throne in the person of Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.). There are some indications to show that he was a usurper who made his way to power amid the domestic disturbances which had troubled Assyria for the previous twenty years. In any case he was able to restore domestic peace, and until 739 B.C. was occupied in consolidating his power upon the north and east. He was then able to turn his forces westwards. We have seen that earlier Assyrian kings had been content to leave the nations subject to them in some degree of autonomy. The native rulers were left upon the throne, and there was no interference with internal affairs as long as the tribute was paid. The result had been continual revolts necessitating fresh expeditions, and Tiglath-Pileser therefore introduced a new policy. "I set my commander-in-chief as governor over them", and similar phrases, are of continual recurrence in his inscriptions. Not only did he thus depose the

native rulers of subjugated states, but in special cases he would deport the inhabitants, or a large proportion of them, and settle them among strangers at a long distance from their homes. Thus they were unable to concert measures for revolt with their fellow subjects, and the Assyrian power was secured by this ruthless means.

Shallum, the assassin of Zechariah, was almost immediately murdered by Menahem, who then held the throne for ten years. He met with considerable opposition in many parts of Israel, which he put down with atrocious cruelty. The place called Tiphsah, which he smote, cannot possibly be Thapsacus on the Euphrates, and must lie within the boundaries of Israel. Probably the suggestion that Tirzah should be read is correct, and we must assume that this town, Menahem's own headquarters, revolted from him when he had left it to seize the throne. He was only able to maintain his position with the help of the Assyrian Pul, i.e. Tiglath-Pileser, to whom he paid a thousand talents of silver to "confirm the kingdom in his hand". There is no record of this transaction in the Assyrian inscriptions, but these are constantly defective for the reign of Tiglath-Pileser. On the other hand, there are several references in the inscriptions to Azriau or Isriau of Judah, but in so fragmentary a connection that we cannot say anything of them, except that they seem to show Azariah as opposing the Assyrian advance. Menahem raised his tribute by a tax of fifty shekels

2 Kings xv 13–31.

*2 Kings xv 16.

*Hos. v 13.

upon all "the mighty men of wealth", which will give their number as some sixty thousand. These events belong to the year 738 B.C. Menahem was able to secure the throne for his son Pekahiah; but the new king was overthrown after two years by a tribal conspiracy headed by the Gileadites under Pekah, a misguided patriot, to all seeming, who proposed to throw off the Assyrian yoke. He was supported in his design by Rezin, King of Damascus, who wished to form a general coalition of all the western tribes and peoples against the Assyrians. Tiglath-Pileser was occupied in suppressing revolts nearer home during the next two years, and the opportunity may thus have seemed favourable for a western rising.

Jotham's regency in Judah had ended with the death of his father Uzziah. Jotham fought against the Ammonites, and reduced them to pay tribute; he also added to the Temple, and further strengthened the fortifications of Jerusalem. These were to be tested under the reign of his successor Ahaz, a weak-minded opportunist, who would face no difficulty that he could evade. Jotham had declined to join the Syro-Ephraimite alliance against the Assyrians, and Ahaz continued his policy. Rezin and Pekah attacked Jerusalem, intending to depose Ahaz and set up a creature of their own, "the son of Tabeel". They were unable to storm the city, but Judah suffered considerable loss; the Edomites recovered Elath, and the Philistines took several towns in the Shephelah. Ahaz, therefore,

2 Kings xv 32–38.
2 Chron. xxvii.

2 Kings xvi.
2 Chron. xxviii.

Is. vii.

in a panic sought relief by inviting Tiglath-Pileser to attack the northern confederacy, offering his submission as a vassal, and sending a considerable tribute as well. The Assyrian, who would probably have taken this step in any case, defeated and killed Rezin and captured Damascus. His own account of these operations seems to display a certain grim humour: "Like a mouse he entered the great gate of his city. His chiefs I took alive with my hands, and I caused them to be raised up and to view the land on stakes; forty-five camps of soldiers I collected in the province of his city, and shut him up like a bird in a cage." Tiglath-Pileser also attacked Israel, overran the northern part of the country, and carried away a large number of captives to Assyria in pursuance of his usual policy of deportation. The failure of Pekah's policy led to a conspiracy against him, and his overthrow by Hoshea in 734 or 733 B.C.

These events, and the history of Judah in general until the death of Hezekiah, are illuminated for us by the work of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was a patriot and a statesman as well as a poet and prophet, and his great interest to us consists in the method by which he applied religious principles to solve the political problems of his age. We learn little of his private life from his writings; his father, Amoz, is not to be identified with the prophet Amos. Isaiah, unlike that prophet, was an aristocrat; he was acquainted with the ways of court and had ready access to the king, and we may conclude that he had enjoyed

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TIGLATH-PILESER III WITH HIS FOOT ON THE NECK OF A CONQUERED ENEMY

whatever advantages education and social intercourse could offer to a citizen of Jerusalem at that time. His call took place, as he tells us, "in the year that King Uzziah died". His prophecies, as we have them (i.e. chapters i–xxxix; see note to chapter ix), do not follow one another in chronological order; they consist of pronouncements upon the affairs of Judah and of views upon her future, extending over a period of some forty years. The editor or editors who collected them were doubtless unable to assign a date to every prophecy with which they had to deal; when the whole body of ancient prophecy was collected about the time of Ezra, two and a half centuries later than Isaiah's age, such uncertainty was to be expected. Nor has it been removed in our own day, and we are unable to assign a proportion of Isaiah's words to any particular period of his life with any certainty. Other prophecies, however, are preceded by historical notes, or contain allusions which enable us to refer them to special events within the prophet's lifetime or even beyond it.

*Is. vi 1.

The account of Isaiah's call shows him impressed at the outset by two leading ideas, the holiness of Jehovah and the hopelessness of his prophetic mission. He was to deal with a people who were not only insensible to spiritual things, but whose callousness would actually be increased by his preaching. It is a case of the strange phenomenon of moral blindness which is intensified by further disclosure of truth (see note to Chapter III). The only cure is the

*Is. vi 9, 10.

destruction of Judah as a nation, and the purification of a "remnant" which shall return. We have in this vision the main principles which Isaiah elaborated in his later teaching, and at the risk of anticipating the course of events, it is worth while to examine them more closely.

The "holiness" of Jehovah had a special meaning for Isaiah; the attribute had been degraded by application to other gods, but to the prophet it implies the power and majesty of Jehovah, His moral purity and perfection, and His uniqueness; He was the only God, and could claim universal adoration. But there is no absolute separation between Jehovah and the world. He has a purpose in history, His action is manifest in history and He calls Isaiah to help that purpose. The failure to see the finger of God in the stirring changes of the time is one of the great faults of the religious leaders; the first chapter, the "Great Arraignment", calls the people to realize that their misfortunes are sent upon them by Jehovah, to make them think, and think of Him, to rouse them from the torpor engendered by the mechanical performance of religious routine. The Assyrian is but Jehovah's instrument: if the instrument becomes presumptuous, Jehovah's anger will destroy it. Thus, while regarding Jehovah as very exalted because of his holiness, Isaiah can also regard Him as very near because of His work in the world. Divine sovereignty over the whole world is to the prophet a

*Is. x 12, 24.

*Is. i 12.

*Is. xviii 4.

real and practical principle by which history can be interpreted.

The revelation of his call and the application of this principle convinces the prophet that his task is hopeless, and that the effect of his ministry will be to confirm the doom of his people. While Amos speaks of a "famine of the word of the Lord", Isaiah has realized that the abundance of the word is likely to be even more dangerous to Judah. But this dismal prospect does not necessitate counsels of despair. Faith alone could save either individual believers or the nation as a whole: "in quietness and confidence shall be your strength"; trust in Jehovah, not in foreign alliances, was the watchword. As the nation were unable to grasp this principle, their destruction was certain. But a spiritual nucleus would survive; a remnant shall be saved.

*Is. xxx 10; xxix 10.

*Is. vii 9; xxviii 16; xxx 15.

From the doctrine of the "remnant" are developed two further ideas; if they are to act in co-operation they must have a centre round which to rally and a leader to guide them: hence we have the two ideas of the inviolate Zion and the Messiah. Whether Isaiah believed that the Temple sanctuary itself would be inviolate, or whether he used the expression to symbolize the belief that the worship of Jehovah would ever be the bond of unity for the remnant, is too complex a question for discussion here. The prophet learned by experience as well as by revelation, and his language and the ideals which it expresses vary with the periods

of his ministry. From his language upon such occasions as Sennacherib's invasion, it seems clear that he believed that the city of his own day would never be desecrated by a foreign host, and the event justified his faith. In any case Zion is to be the centre of the ideal kingdom to which he looks forward. The figure of the ideal king is described in three passages at least; he is to be the perfect realization upon earth of Jehovah's rule over Israel and the world. By his endowment with the spirit of God, his government will be divine in character. Such, in general outline, is Isaiah's system of belief. It was attained gradually by the prophet himself, it was disregarded or misinterpreted by his contemporaries and his posterity, and is not now fully comprehensible. But we can at least see how he applied his principles to the political facts before him.

*Is. ix 1–7; xi 1–9; xxxii 1. (Cp. vii 14–16; xxxiii 17.)

At the time of the Syro-Ephraimite invasion, Isaiah is sent to meet Ahaz, and finds him inspecting the water supply of Jerusalem. Either he was preparing to fill the city reservoirs or to cut off any supply that the enemy could use; in the sieges of Jerusalem the attackers usually suffered more from scarcity of water than the besieged. Isaiah bids the king to be composed, for the invasion would come to nought. The king refuses belief, and is bidden to ask for a sign; he declines to "tempt the Lord", to put Jehovah to a test. Obviously believing that the sign would be given, he cannot

Is. vii 1; viii 15.

trust the policy which it would guarantee, and therefore declines the test under a pretence of reverence. He is told that a child will be born as a sign, and named "God with us"; calamities will follow which will justify that name, for they will only be explicable if Isaiah's teaching upon Jehovah's will and nature be accepted. Having failed to influence the king, the prophet is bidden to emphasize his divinely inspired view of the situation by two symbolical actions: he is to write down and exhibit a word, which again will be explained by the name of a son to be born to him, "Hasten-booty-speed-spoil", a prophecy of the speedy overthrow of Ephraim and Syria by Assyria.

Isaiah's practical object was to avoid the appeal to Assyrian intervention. He saw that Damascus and Ephraim were not permanent dangers; but Assyria would attack sooner or later, and why accelerate the moment? If Ahaz had not bought the help of Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian would have been driven by his own interests to attack Damascus, and Ahaz would have had the advantage he desired without the disadvantage of paying for it in tribute, prestige, and loss of safety. Isaiah's prophecy was not entirely fulfilled in detail; the Assyrian invasion of Judah, which he expected in ten or twelve years, during the childhood of Immanuel, was postponed for more than a generation. But the prophet's anticipations in general were verified in a remarkable degree, and the attitude he adopted was based on a foresight

which no ordinary human political skill could have acquired. The danger threatened by Pekah and Rezin proved as transitory as he declared it to be, and as no other politician would have ventured to imagine.

Ahaz was summoned to Damascus by Tiglath-Pileser to perform his promised homage in person. There he was attracted by the pattern of an altar, or was required by policy to acknowledge the gods of his overlord; at any rate, he set up a similar altar in the Temple, and also desecrated the vessels of the sanctuary, probably to satisfy the further demands of the Assyrians. He displayed in any case a strong leaning to idolatry, and is said to have sacrificed his own son or children by fire, apparently re-introducing the abominable worship of Molech. Possibly the sacrifice was offered as a propitiation at the time of the panic caused by the attack of the northern confederacy; but though Isaiah describes the panic, he nowhere alludes to this horrible attempt to avert the danger.

2 Kings xvi 10–20.
2 Chron. xxviii 22–25.
*1 Kings xi 7.
*Is. vii 2.

Meanwhile Pekah had been killed by Hoshea, who had led a popular rising against him. Tiglath-Pileser's inscriptions show that Hoshea at once surrendered to him and paid tribute, probably as the only means of securing his position. After this expedition there is no record to show that Tiglath-Pileser ever went westward again. During his absence the Chaldæans and Aramæans had attacked Babylonia, one

2 Kings xv 30, 31; xvii.

of their chiefs being a young man, Merodach-Baladan, who rises to importance at a later date. While Tiglath-Pileser was thus occupied, he died in 727 B.C., and was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV. There is a dearth of inscriptions concerning Shalmaneser IV, and his relation to his predecessor, if any, is unknown. Possibly he also was a military usurper who took advantage of his master's failing health, and the fact that he spent the first year of his reign at home tends to confirm this idea. It was in 726 B.C. that he advanced against Hoshea, who had been privately negotiating with So or Shabaka, the King of Egypt, for help against the Assyrians. For nearly two centuries Egypt had been reduced to weakness by domestic troubles: a dynasty of Ethiopian rulers had now conquered the whole Nile valley and was able to begin a forward policy on the frontiers of Egypt and Palestine. Egyptian politicians could see that a collision between themselves and the Assyrians was imminent sooner or later, and were anxious to use Palestine as a buffer state. The Assyrian resident had doubtless informed his master of Hoshea's treasonable action. Hoshea was imprisoned, and Shalmaneser began the siege of Samaria, which lasted three years; on his death the city was captured by his successor, Sargon, in 722 B.C. or early in 721 B.C. Samaria was a strong fortress, and the Assyrians, whose experience of besieging rock fortresses was not great, were no doubt obliged to starve the defenders out. Sargon was probably not present in person at

2 Kings xviii 9-12.

the final scene; his recent accession, and possibly the fact that his claim to the Assyrian throne was not hereditary, obliged him to remain in Assyria. The inscription in which he commemorated the victory states that he carried twenty-seven thousand two hundred and ninety persons into captivity.

Sargon in his Chariot

These were settled in Halah, near Haran, and by the river Habor, the Chaboras, in Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. Sargon's forces then turned southwards and met the Egyptian army under So at Raphia. There are indications that Egypt had been attempting to combine the Palestinian peoples against the Assyrians; Hanon, King of Gaza, had been in negotiations with Egypt, and probably Hezekiah of Judah had been invited to join the movement. Hanon was made prisoner, and the Egyptian king, who is called the "Tartan"

or commander-in-chief by Sargon's inscription, was utterly defeated. The state of affairs in Syria thus seemed to be satisfactory from Sargon's point of view, and he was able to turn his attention to the north of his kingdom, where other disturbances were in progress.

Thus the kingdom of Israel came to an end, about two centuries after its establishment by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Sargon naturally did not strip the country of its inhabitants, but carried away the leading men and the rich, who would be likely to concert a future rising if they were left in possession of their land. Much futile speculation has been expended upon the fate of the lost Ten Tribes; but the ten tribes as such were never carried away. The deported fragments of the Israelite nationality were settled widely apart in the provinces of Assyria, and were doubtless speedily absorbed by the native population. There was no tie of union to sustain their vitality. Their belief in Jehovah was weak, and written scriptures they had few or none. The belief that Jehovah could not be worshipped in a foreign land was fully exemplified in their case. We shall afterwards see how the work of Isaiah and other prophets provided Judah with a spiritual vitality which enabled her to survive the trials of exile. Such vitality was absolutely wanting to the horde of Israelites who were driven away to Assyria. Their places were taken by unfortunates in like case, whom Sargon brought from Hamath, Ivah and Sepharvaim, places recently conquered by the Assyrians. With the

Israelites who had been left behind these settlers formed a mixed population, the Samaritans of a later age. The new settlers were soon in difficulties with the wild animals which now infested the ravaged and desolate countrysides. They regarded their own deities as local gods, and when they sought a reason for this plague they naturally inferred that it was inflicted by the god of the country whose worship they had neglected. They appealed to Sargon, who sent them an Israelite priest to teach them the proper mode of worship. This they would have declined to learn from the natives left in the land; the mode of worship, the ritual and ceremonial observance, which, as heathen, they thought all-important, could only be learned from an expert. To the worship of Jehovah, as taught by the returned priest and his followers, the immigrants added that of their native deities.

Thus Israel passed out of existence. The fate of Samaria enabled the prophets of Judah to point the moral; upon them and their country now devolved the sole responsibility of preserving the oracles of God.

*Is. xxviii 1–4.

The picture of social life in Judah under the reign of Ahaz which may be gathered from the prophecies of Isaiah is gloomy in the extreme. We have already referred to the evils arising from the influx of wealth gained by commerce, the spread of luxury among the upper and of poverty among the lower classes, the eviction of the poor landholder by abuse of the forms of justice, the

prevalent idolatry and superstition, the delusion that Jehovah could be propitiated by ritual and service, whatever the character of the worshippers. Isaiah found a helper in the prophet Micah, whose ministry began in the last days of Samaria's struggle, and who regarded the state of the nation from a point of view which Isaiah was unable to take. Micah was a native of Moresheth-Gath, a small town on the Philistine frontier, which fact may explain his obvious interest in the progress of Assyria. He stigmatizes the same sins as those which Isaiah denounced—the corruption of the ruling classes, the idolatry and sorcery, and the false confidence in a false idea of Jehovah, sustained by lying prophets. But unlike Isaiah, Micah was a man of the people, and his picture of social conditions is entirely democratic. The true enemies of the nation were to Micah their own rulers; the judgment to come would be directed against the upper classes, the very circle to which Isaiah belonged. To Isaiah the inviolability of Zion implied its continuance as a seat of government with a court and king; in his ideal state the court circle will be purified and reformed. In Micah's opinion restoration can only begin when the nobles have been swept away. Micah's hope for the future is to begin the history of Israel anew, as from the time of David. The land will be devastated and bands of warriors will carry on a guerrilla warfare, until a new David comes forth

*Mic. i; cp. Jer. xxvi 18.

*Mic. i 5, 9, 12.

*Mic. iii 10; ii. 1-8.

*Mic. ii 11; iii 5, 11.

*Mic. v 1-15.

from Bethlehem to lead them and to gather the remnant of his people together. Then the kingdom will gradually develop upon new lines under the guidance of Jehovah.

As we may learn from Jeremiah, Micah's words made a strong impression upon his contemporaries. It is certain that the common people suffered severely at this time under the oppression of the nobles and the taxation necessary to raise the Assyrian tribute. It is possible that the ruling classes were prepared to acquiesce in the Assyrian yoke as the best means of securing their own predominance in Judah and of continuing their lives of luxury. It was clear that Judah was doomed unless some shock should rouse her from her lethargy; Isaiah on the one hand, and Assyria on the other, were to provide the required stimulus.

*Jer. xxvi 19.

CHAPTER VI

Hezekiah and Sennacherib

The date of Hezekiah's succession is by no means certain. Probably he came to the throne before the fall of Samaria. No doubt a number of fugitives from the northern state migrated to Jerusalem; in later history we find mention of persons who belonged to one or other of the ten tribes. Possibly pilgrimages were made to Jerusalem by Israelites who had been left in the northern province. At

*Ezra vi 17.
Luke ii 36.
James i 1.

all events, Judah remained the only hope of Israel, and the Temple was left without a rival.

It was doubtless Isaiah's teaching and the example of Samaria that spurred Hezekiah to begin a religious reform. He "broke in pieces the brazen serpent which Moses had made", as it had become an object of worship; he also destroyed the high places and the local sanctuaries. There is no doubt that Hezekiah's reforms were intended to secure a definite object, the centralization of Jehovah's worship. This purpose may seem at first sight to be somewhat inconsistent with Isaiah's teaching upon the universality of Jehovah; but the inviolability of Zion was also an integral part of that teaching. The time was far distant when men "should worship the Father neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem". The want of a sacred centre of worship and of an inviolable sanctuary was inconceivable to Isaiah. The course of events had also been moving towards such centralization. The Temple was, in a sense, the national bank; kings drew upon its stores of wealth in times of emergency. The local sanctuaries, though nominally devoted to Jehovah, really tended to perpetuate the idolatry of the Baalim, while the small extent of the kingdom of Judah made it possible for the worshippers of Jehovah to assemble periodically at the Temple. The Chronicler gives an account of the solemn festivals by which the reform was inaugurated, of the reorganization of the priests and Levites into

2 Kings xviii 1-8.
2 Chron. xxix, xxx.

*Jer. xi 13.

courses, and of the arrangements for collecting the tithes imposed for their support. The reality of these reforms may be estimated in some degree by the extent of the reaction which afterwards broke out under Manasseh.

Throughout the reign of Ahaz, Judah had been a vassal state of Assyria. Hezekiah threw off his allegiance and made preparations for defence. An important part of this work was an improvement in the water supply. The springs in the valley of the Kidron, outside the wall, were "sealed", and diverted so that they should not be available for the use of any invading force. The water was led within the circuit of the city walls by a tunnel—an engineering work of no mean order, the construction of which is generally ascribed to Hezekiah's age upon the evidence of an inscription in ancient style found at its central point, which runs as follows: "When yet the hewers were lifting the pick, each towards his fellow, and when yet there were three cubits to be bored, heard was the voice of each calling to his fellow; for there was a fissure from south even to north. And on the day of the boring, the hewers struck, each to meet his fellow, pick against pick; then went the waters from the issue to the pool for two hundred and a thousand cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the head of the hewers." Hezekiah also repaired the city walls and strengthened them by additions.

2 Kings xx 20.
2 Chron. xxxii 30.

*Is. xxii 9-11.

Isaiah's policy was one of neutrality: "he that believeth will not make haste". But the

temptation to form foreign alliances and to combine confederacies against the Assyrians was very strong, and Isaiah's efforts were constantly devoted to opposing these projects. The order of events previous to Sennacherib's invasion is by no means certain, but the first temptation seems to have come from Babylonia itself. Merodach-Baladan, a Chaldean from the marshes from southern Babylonia, had seized the throne of Babylon in 722 B.C. His opportunity had been provided by the death of Shalmaneser IV, and Sargon was occupied with wars elsewhere. The rebel was consequently able to maintain his position for twelve years. But, as Sargon subdued the outlying portions of his empire, it became clear that an Assyrian invasion of Babylonia was imminent, and Merodach-Baladan therefore hoped to divert attention from himself by arousing trouble in the west.

Hezekiah's sickness and recovery probably took place about this time, 714 B.C. The prophet's promise to him of deliverance from Assyria, refers to the one topic of political discussions then occupying all minds. Negotiations seem to have been previously opened between Merodach-Baladan and Hezekiah. The former made Hezekiah's illness the occasion for sending him a present and an embassy, and Hezekiah, anxious to produce an impression of his wealth and power, showed the messengers the resources of his kingdom. He was rebuked by Isaiah in terms which seem to refer to Manasseh's future imprisonment in Baby-

2 Kings xx.
2 Chron. xxxii 24.
Is. xxxviii, xxxix.

lon, and the prophet's warning was apparently effectual. But the account of Sargon's next campaign shows that a general confederacy had been proposed in the west which Egypt was prepared to support. The focus of disaffection, however, was not so much Jerusalem as Ashdod. Sargon's inscriptions show that the King of Ashdod, Azuri, had withheld his tribute, and attempted to raise the neighbouring states in revolt. Sargon then deposed him and set up his brother. He was removed by the people of Ashdod, who chose a certain Yamen as their leader. Sargon sent a flying column against Ashdod. The city was plundered and its inhabitants were deported. Judah, Edom and Moab, the other tribes involved, seem to have escaped punishment at this time, as Sargon was too busily occupied elsewhere to prosecute his success. These events belong to the year 711 B.C., and Isaiah then performed a symbolical action at the command of Jehovah, wearing the dress of a beggar or captive for three years as a protest against the false hopes of help from Egypt or Ethiopia. The policy of Egyptian alliance, of which more will be heard later, here comes into prominence for the first time.

Is. xx 1-6.

Sargon was occupied with his operations against Merodach-Baladan in 710 and 709 B.C.; in the latter year the usurper was defeated, and his capital taken in 706 B.C. In the next year Sargon was murdered, and his son Sennacherib ascended the throne. Merodach-Baladan reappeared for a short time, but was speedily routed. The new ruler's

first two campaigns were conducted in the north of Elam. His third expedition was westward, and brought him to the land of Judah in the course of the year 701 B.C.

The early years of Sennacherib's reign doubtless seemed to Hezekiah's advisers a favourable opportunity for vigorous action, with the object of shaking off the supremacy of Assyria. Merodach-Baladan was again causing trouble at Babylon; and in 704 B.C. an able and enterprising ruler became viceroy of Egypt under the Ethiopian throne of Napata. This was Tirhakah (Taharqa), who eventually became master of the whole Ethiopian kingdom in 693 B.C. He was fully alive to the danger of an Assyrian attack upon Egypt, and was anxious to raise disaffection among the states upon his northern frontier. For this purpose he sent an embassy to Hezekiah, who appears as the leader of the Palestine states. Isaiah's charge to the ambassadors explains his policy. *Is. xviii. With respect and urbanity he rejects their overtures; they are to return to their "tall and polished" nation, to say that Jehovah will crush the Assyrian in His own time, without human help, and so demonstrate His supreme power to Ethiopia and the whole world. But the prospect of Tirhakah's help was attractive to a strong party at Jerusalem, who seem to have been led by Shebna, the scribe. Isaiah's denunciations give us a glimpse of the political struggle. *Is. xxii 15–25. He shows his contempt for Shebna's ostentation, and prophesies the elevation of Eliakim in his

place. But for the moment Shebna and his party were able to gain their desires, and Isaiah bursts into full denunciation of their short-sightedness and impiety. We have a picture of the prophet breaking in upon a festival held to celebrate the renunciation of allegiance to Assyria. He compares the revellers to the drunkards of Ephraim. They mock at the monotony of his teaching in stammering, drunken tones. Are they to be lectured like infants in infantile language? The prophet retorts that Jehovah will also employ a stammering uncouth language, that of the Assyrian invader. His opponents with fatuous confidence spoke of their scheme as a covenant with death and hell, secure against any possible danger, but in the storm of judgment their false refuge will be swept away. There is but one ground of hope—Jehovah's purpose with regard to Zion. The farmer does not plough for the pleasure of ploughing, but in order to sow; and thus Jehovah has a purpose in His judgments. The farmer, again, does not thrash every seed with the same implement—implements suitable to one kind of grain would ruin another; so Judah will be threshed with consideration, that the pure grain may be preserved. But the fatal step has been taken. The people are sunk in moral blindness, and demand the prophets to prophesy smooth things and deceits. The Egyptians are men, and not God; the crisis before Judah is not due to the interaction of mere earthly forces and nations; God has a purpose in history; faith

*Is. xxviii.

*Is. xxix, xxx, xxxi.

can see the principle of His working, and believe that it must prevail. Throughout these chapters the prophet is swayed alternately by two ideas: that earthly alliance cannot help Judah; that to seek it is impious, because Jehovah will keep Zion inviolate. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

The alliance of the states in southern Palestine was thus formed, and Hezekiah prepared for the coming storm. The King of Ekron, Padi, an Assyrian vassal who had been dethroned by his subjects, was sent to Jerusalem for safekeeping, an indication of the fact that Judah was regarded as the leading state in that district. Sennacherib, who tells us of Padi's deposition, also states that the garrison of Jerusalem was strengthened by Arab mercenaries; while at the subsequent battle of Eltekeh, near Ekron, he encountered "bowmen, chariots, and horses of the King of Melukhkha", which is thought to have been a state in northern Arabia. Hezekiah's campaign against Gaza and the adjoining territory may have been undertaken about this time to crush any Assyrian supporters in Philistia.

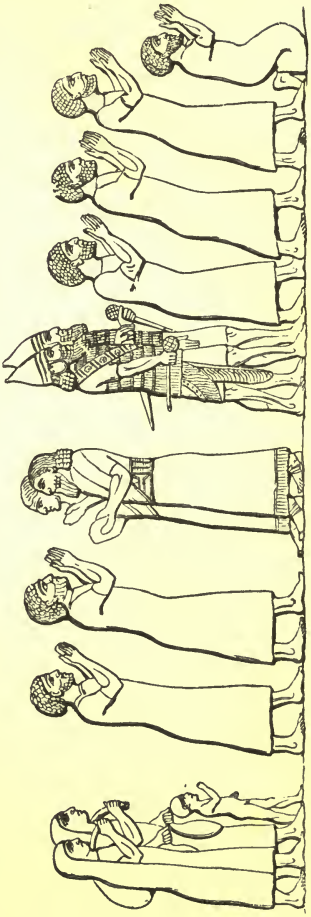
2 Kings xviii 13–xix.
2 Chron. xxxii 1–23.
Is. xxxvi, xxxvii.

*2 Kings xviii 8.

Of Sennacherib's campaign we have several Assyrian accounts. The best known and the most complete is that given by the "Taylor cylinder", now in the British Museum. Four stages of the campaign may be distinguished—the subjugation of the Phœnician cities, the overthrow of the King of Askelon, the operations against Ekron, and the

invasion of Judah. These latter events may be given in the words of the annalist: "The prefects, the princes, and the people of the city Amqarruna (Ekron), who had thrown Padî, their king, who was faithful to the agreement and oath of the land of Assur, into fetters of iron, and given him to Hazaqiau (Hezekiah), of the land of the Yaudâa (Jews)—hostilely in secret they had acted—feared in their hearts. The kings of the land of Musuru (Egypt), (and) the soldiers of the bow, the chariots, (and) the horses of the king of the land of Meluhha, gathered to themselves a numberless force and came to their help. Over against me in sight of Altaqû (Eltekeh) their line of battle was set in array, they called for their weapons. In the service of Assur, my lord, I fought with them, and accomplished their defeat. The charioteers and the sons of the king of the Musurâa (Egyptians), with the charioteers of the king of the land of Meluhha, my hands captured alive in the midst of the battle. (As for) the city of Altaqû (Eltekeh) (and) the city of Tamnâ (Timnah), I besieged, captured, (and) carried off their spoil.

"I approached to the city of Amqarruna, and the prefects and princes who had caused the wrong to be, I killed, and on stakes around the city I hung their corpses. The sons of the city doing the crime and misdeed I counted as spoil. The rest of them who did not commit sin and wickedness, whose evil deed was not, I commanded their release. I caused Padî, their king, to come forth from the midst of Ursalimmu (Jerusalem) and



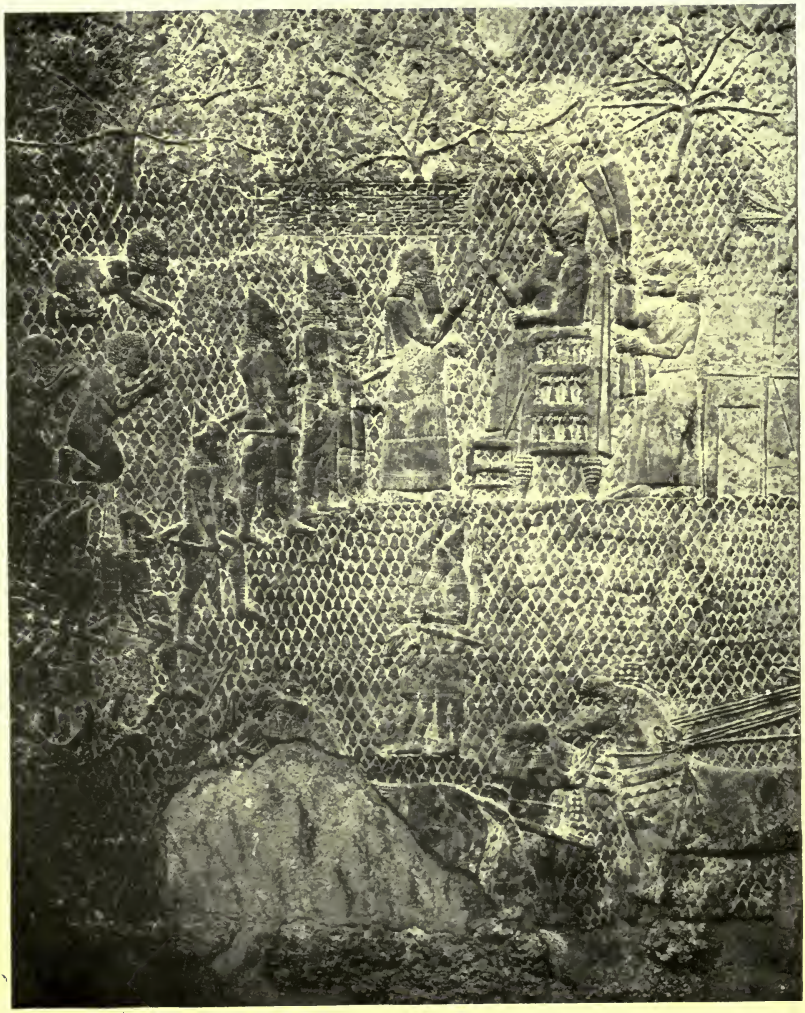
Captive Israelites before Sennacherib

to sit on the throne of dominion over them, and the tribute of my overlordship I imposed upon him. And (as for) Hazaqiau (Hezekiah), of the land of the Yaudâa (Jews), who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong cities, fortresses and small towns which were around them, which were innumerable, with overthrowing by battering-rams, and advance of towers, infantry attack, breaching, cutting, and earthworks, I besieged (and) captured: two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep, which were without number, from their midst I caused to come forth and reckoned as spoil. As for him, like a cage bird I shut him up within Ursalimmu, the city of his dominion. Redoubts I threw up around him, and I cut off the exit from the great gate of his city; it was (completely) covered. His cities, which I had

spoiled, I detached from the midst of his country, and gave (them) to Mitintu, King of Asdudu (Ashdod), Padî, King of Amqarruna (Ekron), and Sillibêl, King of the city Hazitu (Gaza), and (thus) reduced his land. Over the former tribute, their yearly gift, I added a payment as the due of my overlordship, and imposed it upon him. As for him, Hazaqiau (Hezekiah), fear of the magnificence of my lordship struck him, and the *urbi* and his chosen soldiers, which he had brought in for the defence of Ursalimmu, the city of his kingdom, and had as guards(?), with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious (stones), guhli, daggassi,[1] great carbuncles(?), couches of ivory, state thrones of ivory, elephant skin, elephant tooth (ivory), ebony(?), urkarinnu wood, all sorts of things,[2] and his daughters, the women of his palace, male singers, (and) female singers, he[3] caused to be brought after me to the midst of Ninua (Nineveh), the city of my dominion, and he sent his messenger to present the gift and pay homage."

The correspondence between the Assyrian and the Biblical records is obvious and striking. But there is one apparent difficulty. The inscription represents Hezekiah's surrender as due to the siege of Jerusalem; the Biblical narrative says nothing of a siege at the time of his surrender and offer to pay tribute; the host under the Tartan is the first mention of a besieging force. There is a simple solution of the difficulty; the inscription covers

[1] Unknown objects; perhaps gold bangles or similar things.
[2] Lit. "whatever its name".
[3] Or "I".



C 309—(16)

SENNACHERIB BEFORE LACHISH

The king is seated on his throne, near which are vines and fig trees. His officers before him report the events of the siege, and behind them kneel the representatives of the conquered people. The inscription in front of the king reads: "Sennacherib, king of hosts, king of Assyria, sat upon his throne of state, and the spoil of the city of Lachish passed before him".

events as far as ver. 16 of 2 Kings xviii. From ver. 17 onwards the Assyrian chronicler has nothing to say, and least of all anything to say concerning the final disaster. Oriental kings were not in the habit of chronicling their disasters; and in this respect their records are strikingly different from Biblical narratives.

Thus the course of events was as follows:—Sennacherib ravaged Judah and blockaded Jerusalem. Hezekiah induced him to raise the siege by payment of a heavy tribute. Jerusalem itself was not surrendered to the Assyrian; but the offer and the tribute were sent to him at Lachish, whither he had gone with part of his troops. The departure of the besiegers was hailed with reckless hilarity by the people; the housetops were crowded, feasting began; there was no thought of their humiliation in the fact that they had been obliged to buy their deliverance, and no thought of the future—probably it was only a respite; "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die". To their despair, an Assyrian army reappeared before the city under the Tartan, the commander-in-chief, the Rabshakeh, the chief of the princes, the highest civil official in Assyria, and the Rabsaris, whose office is not clear. They were sent not to assault the town—the Assyrians were not competent besiegers of a rock-defended city—but to try to persuade the king to surrender. Sennacherib wished to continue his campaign in the south, and prudence forbade him to leave so important a fortress unreduced upon his rear. The Rabshakeh, stand-

*Is. xxii 13.

ing upon the spot whence Hezekiah had diverted the water supply, gave his message to Hezekiah's officials—Eliakim, who had now taken Shebna's place as grand vizier; Shebna, the royal secretary; and Joah, the royal chronicler. The message was intended for the people to hear: Egypt was an untrustworthy ally, Hezekiah had offended Jehovah by removing the high places, and the Assyrian was himself supported by Jehovah. The Hebrews, fearing that the Rabshakeh might produce some effect, asked him to speak in Aramæan, the diplomatic language of the time. As the appeal to the diplomatists had failed, the Rabshakeh naturally disregarded the request of Hezekiah's ministers, and proceeded to appeal to the people with every argument that was likely to arouse disaffection among them. Hezekiah is deceiving them; their intended deportation is not a hard fate; they will be carried to a better land than Judah, where they may live in comfort and plenty. Let them look at the long record of Assyrian conquests! Captives from those cities were even then settled in Samaria; their gods had not helped them; why should Hezekiah's god be any more powerful?

The people were silent, and the ministers returned to Hezekiah. The king is reduced to admit that his own policy has been a failure; the policy of faith and reliance preached by Isaiah is the only remaining alternative, and the king therefore sends a deputation to the prophet. The Rabshakeh returned to his master, and found him engaged in operations against Libnah, another Judean strong-

C 309—(17)

ASSAULT UPON THE CITY OF ...ALAMMU (JERUSALEM?) BY THE ASSYRIANS

The besieging archers are protected by wicker screens.

hold. News had come that Tirhakah of Ethiopia was advancing, and Sennacherib must turn southwards and leave Jerusalem unreduced upon his rear. As a final effort, he sent Hezekiah a letter repeating the arguments of the Rabshakeh, with the slight difference that he represents Hezekiah as deceived by his God, whereas the Rabshakeh had represented him as a deceiver of the people. Hezekiah's prayer to Jehovah was answered by a message from Isaiah. The calm confidence of the prophet is remarkable when contrasted with his previous agitation and indignation; now that the issue is left in the hands of Jehovah all will be well. The Assyrian is but an instrument in Jehovah's hand; in his pride he had deemed himself master of the whole earth. Jehovah will put his bridle in his lips, and drag him back to his place as a captive.

Assyrian Bridles in Lips of Captives

The prophet's foresight was marvellously confirmed. No other cause than terrible and unexpected disaster would adequately explain Sennacherib's precipitate retreat from his Egyptian expedition.

A confirmation of the fact is to be found in the Egyptian legend related by Herodotus (ii 141): "The next king, I was told, was a priest of Hephæstos, called Sethos. This monarch despised and neglected the warrior class of the Egyptians, as though he did not need their services. Among other indignities which he offered them, he took from them the lands which they had possessed under all the previous kings, consisting of twelve acres of choice land for each warrior. Afterwards, therefore, when Sennacherib, King of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched his vast army into Egypt, the warriors one and all refused to come to his aid. On this the monarch, greatly distressed, entered into the inner sanctuary, and before the image of the god bewailed the fate which impended over him. As he wept he fell asleep, and dreamed that the god came and stood at his side, bidding him be of good cheer, and go boldly forth to meet the Arabian host, which would do him no hurt, as he himself would send those who should help him. Sethos then, relying on the dream, collected such of the Egyptians as were willing to follow him, who were none of them warriors, but traders, artisans, and market people; and with these marched to Pelusium, which commands the entrance into Egypt, and there pitched his camp. As the two armies lay here opposite to one another, there came in the night a multitude of field mice, which devoured all the quivers and bowstrings of the enemy, and ate the thongs by which they managed their shields. Next morning they commenced their flight,

and great multitudes fell, as they had no arms with which to defend themselves. There stands to this day in the temple of Hephæstos a stone statue of Sethos, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription to this effect: 'Look on me and learn to reverence the gods'." Among the Egyptians the mouse was the symbol of plague,[1] and we may reasonably infer that the legend was based upon a deadly epidemic which ravaged the Assyrian camp, and which was more likely to occur in the pestilential marshes of Pelusium, at the mouth of the Nile, than anywhere else in the world. The idea that the disaster took place before the walls of Jerusalem, to which Byron's well-known poem has lent some support, is absolutely unjustified by any evidence to be derived from the Bible record. The silence of the Assyrian records concerning the disaster is in accordance with their usual practice of relating victories but not defeats. Sennacherib's assassination did not take place until 681 B.C., twenty years later. During this period he conducted five successful campaigns, but he never again set foot in Judah.

*1 Sam. vi 11.

The credit of Jerusalem's safety undoubtedly belongs to Isaiah. During the period of doubt and despair, when Sennacherib had treacherously demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, after accepting the tribute as a condition of retreat, it was Isaiah's calm courage which inspired his countrymen to persevere in their resistance.

Is. xxxiii.

[1] Compare Apollo's title *σμινθεύς* (Homer, *Il.* i 39), the "sender of mice", as the god of plagues, and the archer of pestilential shafts.

The agitation of these days and the joy of deliverance find expression in the Psalms. But Isaiah himself depicts for us the anguish and terror in Jerusalem when deliverance seemed hopeless, and the revulsion of joy when safety was assured. The treachery of the foe has filled the city with distress; the land is waste, and mourns together with its inhabitants; but the voice of Jehovah announces the destruction of the invaders. All admit the power of Jehovah, whether they will or no, at so signal an instance of His omnipotence; but very different is the effect upon men's minds. The ungodly question themselves in apprehension: how can they dwell with the "devouring fire" of Jehovah's holiness? The prophet replies that the righteous man alone can so dwell, and draws a picture of the new Jerusalem and her prosperity when righteousness is supreme.

Ps. xlvi; *liii 5.

The date of Hezekiah's death is uncertain; probably both he and Isaiah died soon after 690 B.C. Hezekiah cannot be called a strong ruler; he lent too ready an ear to politicians who preferred methods of pure expediency. But his religious sense was profound and genuine; and the collection of proverbs made under his direction attests his interest in literature.

*Prov. xxv 1.

Note upon Sennacherib's Campaign.—The account given above is that which may be regarded as the "conservative" view of the event; it is right, however, to mention other points which have induced many scholars to modify their opinion. Discussion centres round the question whether the two missions sent by Sennacherib to Jerusalem took place in the course of one campaign, or during two separate campaigns

divided by a term of years, the first occurring in 701 B.C., and the second later in Sennacherib's reign. The external evidence is not conclusive: Esarhaddon's annals refer to a campaign by Sennacherib in northern Arabia; a recently discovered fragment of Sennacherib's annals shows that Sennacherib made a western campaign between 691 and 689 to suppress a revolt stirred up by Tirhakah the Ethiopian King of Egypt. Further, Tirhakah's power over Lower Egypt did not become absolute until about 693; and the Biblical reference to Sennacherib's murder is more obvious if a campaign about 690 was the subject of description than it is if the narrative is confined to events in 701, twenty years before that murder. On the two-campaign hypothesis, then, the course of events is assumed to have run as follows:—After receiving Hezekiah's tribute, Sennacherib sent the Rabshakeh to demand surrender; the Assyrian king was then suddenly recalled by news of a revolt in Babylon. About 690 he returned to the west and marched against Tirhakah, after making some conquests in northern Arabia. Upon this occasion he did not come near Jerusalem, but sent Hezekiah the letter. Then occurred the pestilence and the retreat of Sennacherib. There is no inherent improbability in the "conservative" view; Hezekiah may have expected help from Egypt as well in 701 as in 690, and until further external evidence is forthcoming, the two-campaign theory can hardly be considered as proved.

The "land of Musri" or "Musuru", as the inscriptions have it, has also become the subject of discussion. Sennacherib's battle at Altaku or Eltekeh in Dan, before he turned upon Jerusalem, was fought with the King or Kings of Musuri and the King of Melukhkha; Musuri has been generally interpreted as the Hebrew Misraim or Egypt. If it be assumed that Judah could expect no support from Egypt before the rise of Tirhakah in 693, the question is raised, what was the Musuri against which Sennacherib fought in 701? A theory has been elaborated by Dr. Winckler, which a number of scholars are inclined to accept, that an Arabian state of this name existed, and extended from the Gulf of Akaba on the east to the Philistine district on the north, and that it was with this state and not with Egypt proper that Sargon fought

at Raphia in 720. The theory may remove certain apparent inconsistencies in the history as we know it, but the difficulty of assuming the existence of two conterminous states bearing practically the same name is very great. Probably the district north-east of Egypt was regarded as part of that country, though not necessarily inhabited by pure Egyptians or always under Egyptian supremacy. Here again we require greater knowledge of Egyptian affairs at this time before the question can be decided.

CHAPTER VII

Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah

After the great deliverance from Sennacherib a period of darkness descends upon the history of Judah. Manasseh's long reign, though but briefly recorded in the Bible narrative, covered a period of disturbance at home and of change abroad.

2 Kings xxi 1–18.
2 Chron. xxxiii 1–20.

The assassination of Sennacherib and the accession of his son Esarhaddon took place in 680 B.C., probably a few years after Hezekiah's death. The name of "Menase, King of the city of Yaudu", occurs twice in Esarhaddon's tribute lists, so that Judah must have returned to her state of vassalage early in Esarhaddon's reign. In 678 B.C. the King of Sidon, in alliance with a prince of Cilicia, revolted from the Assyrians; in the following year Esarhaddon destroyed Sidon, and it was possibly upon this occasion that he "took Manasseh with chains" and sent him to Babylon, as the Chroni-

C 309—(18)

THE LION HUNTS OF ASHUR-BANI-PAL

In the lower panel, the king is pouring a libation over four dead lions placed before an altar: he is accompanied by bowmen, musicians with stringed instruments, and fan-bearers. The inscription above the scene reads: "I, Ashur-bani-pal, king of hosts, king of Assyria, whom Ashur and Bêlit have endowed with might, slew four lions. The powerful bow of Ishtar, the lady of battle, over them I held, and I poured out a libation over them."

cler relates: the tribute which he exacted from Judah and other states consisted largely of building materials for the construction of his palace. In 676 he made an unsuccessful invasion of Egypt, but this country was subjugated by Assyria in 670. Tirhakah, who had retreated southward, reasserted his power in the course of the next year. Esarhaddon prepared an expedition to drive him back, but died upon the march. He was succeeded by Ashurbanipal in 668, the half-mythical Sardanapalus of classical literature and the "great and noble Asnapper" of Ezra. *Ezra iv 10. His generals reduced Egypt to an Assyrian province in spite of sporadic revolts; the death of the energetic Tirhakah had greatly weakened the Egyptian power of resistance. Ashurbanipal also received an embassy from Gyges, the King of Lydia, who has been regarded as the Gog of Ezekiel. In any case, Assyria reached the height of her power under Ashurbanipal, who does not seem to have conducted his westward campaigns in person, but to have left their responsibility to his generals. He was a patron of art and literature and also a great hunter; his pictorial tablets which illustrate his lion hunts and are now to be seen in the British Museum, are among the most beautiful examples of Assyrian art known to us. *Ezek. xxxviii, xxxix.

Jerusalem and Judah were therefore entirely under Assyrian influence at this time, and this influence, as expressed in art, literature or religion, was Babylonian. Jewish soldiers served in

the Assyrian armies: Ezra states that Ashurbanipal increased the number of Mesopotamian colonists in Samaria; at Gezer two tablets have been discovered, deeds of sale of land, dated 651 and 649, which show that such transactions were completed in the Assyrian language and by means of Assyrian legal forms. Of this influence we have a clear trace in the book of Kings, in the statement that Manasseh worshipped "all the host of heaven". This was the sun, moon, and stars, a worship pre-eminently Babylonian, and especially forbidden in the book of Deuteronomy; Jeremiah and Zephaniah show that the worship was very popular, that it was pursued not only in the Temple courts but upon the housetops, and that families were accustomed to prepare cakes as offerings to the queen of heaven (Ishtar, the planet Venus). The horses and chariots of the sun which Josiah destroyed formed part of the same worship. Other worships of Canaanitish or Phœnician origin were also revived at the same time.

*Ezra iv 10.

*2 Kings xxi 3.

*Deut. iv 19; xvii 3. Jer. vii 18; xix 13. Zeph. i 5.

*2 Kings xxiii 11, 12.

There were several causes for this descent into idolatry, which is represented to us as the most notable event of Manasseh's reign. The adoption of the Babylonian worship was due to political reasons; the complete acceptance of a foreign rule implied acceptance also of its religion. The devastations of the Judæan towns in the time of Sennacherib had probably opened the way for foreign settlers, who were brought into the coun-

try by the great increase of trade and traffic that arose under the Assyrian rule of western Asia. The tendency to reaction from the strong religious conservatism which Hezekiah had enforced must also be remembered. The danger to the religious life of Judah was extreme; Hezekiah had concentrated the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem, and that worship was now attacked in its most vital point at a moment when the policy of centralization had left little chance of its survival in the country districts. Manasseh persecuted those who declined to follow his lead: he "shed innocent blood very much" (tradition relates that Isaiah was sawn asunder during this persecution), but was unable to extirpate the worshippers of Jehovah, as the reign of Josiah will show. But for the moment Babylonian influence was supreme, and further evidence of the fact is to be seen in the adoption about this period of the Babylonian calendar, which dated the beginning of the year from the spring month, in distinction from the Israelite agricultural year, which began at the end of the autumn. Baruch read Jeremiah's prophecies in the ninth month of the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and that was a winter month.

*Cp. Jer. xix 4.

*Jer. xxxvi 9 and 22; xli 1.

Another outstanding feature of the reign is the growth of the city of Jerusalem. Manasseh rebuilt part of the circuit wall and strengthened its fortifications, doubtless to provide protection for a larger number of inhabitants living within or without the walls. The increase in the trade

of Palestine during the age in which Manasseh lived is shown by the fact that Artaxerxes forbade the rebuilding of the walls in the time of Zerubbabel, alleging the wide rule of previous kings of Jerusalem and their enforcement of "toll, tribute, and custom". Ezekiel speaks of Jerusalem as the "gates of the peoples". Under the peace and protection provided by the Assyrian suzerainty there is no doubt that the outward prosperity of Judah increased during the reign of Manasseh, notwithstanding the degradation of religious life.

*Ezra iv 21.

*Ezek. xxvi 2.

Strong evidence of this prosperity and of the contented state of the people is to be found in the circumstances that brought Josiah to the throne. Amon, the son of Manasseh, was killed by his own officials in consequence of some palace intrigue, after a reign of two years. The "people of the land" then killed the murderers, and, with their habitual devotion to the dynasty of David, set Josiah upon the throne.

2 Kings xxi 19–26.
2 Chron. xxxiii 21–25.

As Josiah was but eight years old when he was made king, the government must have been carried on by some form of regency during his early years. Manasseh's persecution had not rooted out every true believer in Jehovah; the suppression of the Babylonian worship might, indeed, be dreaded as likely to arouse the suspicions of Assyria; but the Egyptian party at Jerusalem was beginning to rise again, as an Egyptian king, Psametik I, had recovered his independence, and might be inclined to help his

2 Kings xxii–xxiii 30.
2 Chron. xxxiv, xxxv.

own interests by supporting Judah. It is possible that Amon lost his life in some political intrigue intended to shake off Assyrian supremacy. In any case, the religious reforms of Josiah extended over a period of years, and were identified or concurrent with the resurgence of prophecy. To these years belong the prophecies of Zephaniah and some early chapters of Jeremiah; they draw a gloomy picture of the country and its future. The evils that Isaiah had denounced were unabated, and to them were added the recklessness and despair of men without hope. Both prophets see destruction as a necessary and inevitable preliminary to reconstruction. Meanwhile the death of Ashurbanipal in 625 gave Judah greater liberty to settle her own affairs in her own way.

*Jer. vii–x

We may infer from the account of the Chronicler that Josiah showed a strong tendency to oppose idolatrous practices from an early age; this inclination was confirmed by an event of capital importance which happened in the eighteenth year of his reign. The king wished to take account of the money collected for the restoration of the Temple, in pursuance of the arrangement introduced by Jehoash, and for this purpose sent his chief official, the scribe Shaphan. His family was of importance in the history of Jerusalem; he was the father of Gemariah and the grandfather of Gedaliah. Hilkiah, the high priest, was to reckon the amount of the money under Shaphan's inspection. When this business had been performed,

*2 Chron. xxxiv 3–7.

*Jer. xxxvi 10–12.
Jer. xxxix 14; xl 5–11.

Hilkiah informed Shaphan that he had found "the book of the law in the Temple". The idea that this announcement was a device to get the book into the king's hands is unwarranted; the Temple had been neglected, the high priest had possibly been making repairs or examining the store chambers, and came upon the book by chance. The scribe was impressed by it, and after announcing the conclusion of the financial business to the king, related the discovery and read the book to him.

Josiah seems to have appreciated the importance of the book far more vividly than any of his officials. In grief and terror he ordered them to enquire of Jehovah. A deputation was sent to Huldah, a deeply respected prophetess, whose husband was in charge of the wardrobe for the priestly vestments. The prophetess confirmed the king's fears by her denunciations of the national idolatry. Josiah at once summoned the principal men of Jerusalem to the Temple, and, standing by the pillar in the royal place, read the book before the people, and made, as their representative, a covenant to carry out the ordinances and commands which the book contained. His auditors assented to the covenant, and showed their zeal by destroying the implements found in the Temple for idolatrous worship. The "grove" or Ashera, the sacred pole which stood by the altar, was burned, and the ashes scattered upon graves to desecrate any sanctity that might be supposed to cling to the remnants of the

*2 Kings xi 14.

pole. The country sanctuaries were destroyed, but as these were nominally devoted to the worship of Jehovah, the priests were included in the staff of the Temple, where they formed a subordinate order. The Valley of Hinnom, the scene of human sacrifice, was also defiled: in it was the Topheth, which seems to have been a great fire-pit, where the victim was laid upon a pile of fuel. Ahaz had begun the practice of sacrificing children, and Manasseh had revived it. The people seem to have thought that this practice had the divine sanction. Josiah's work of pollution was complete, and the Gehinnom (Valley of Hinnom) or Gehenna, with its fires perpetually burning, became the "Hell" of the Jew, the Christian, and the Mohammedan. The sun worship was destroyed with the sanctuaries of foreign gods, and the king's zeal went beyond his own territory and overthrew the altar at Bethel, in fulfilment of the prophecy uttered to its founder.

*Mic. vi 6, 7. Jer. vii 31.

*1 Kings xiii 2.

Nor was the work of reform merely negative. The observance of the Passover was ordered in accordance with the regulations given in the newly-discovered book. We are not to suppose that the Passover had been entirely neglected from "the days of Samuel the prophet", as the Chronicler puts it. The narratives both of Kings and Chronicles imply that the Passover celebrations had been maintained, but that the festival had ceased to attract the people in general, and possibly that the ritual had been in some respects neglected. Earlier

celebrations of the Passover are naturally not mentioned, because they formed part of the regular religious life which proceeded in due order as a matter of course.

What, then, was the book or roll which produced this remarkable effect? There is no doubt that it contained at least a part of the book known to us as Deuteronomy, but how much of it we cannot now determine. The books of the law probably underwent revision in the time of Ezra, and perhaps later; moreover, the roll found by Hilkiah cannot have been very lengthy, as it was read through twice in one day, and at a single sitting upon each occasion. The roll is called the "Book of the Law", the "Book of the Covenant", which titles Deuteronomy applies to itself; the consternation of Josiah, or of any religious-minded man, might well be aroused by the denunciation of foreign worship and the awful threats of destruction in case of disobedience. The remedy applied by Josiah, the centralization of worship, corresponds closely with the requirements stated in Deuteronomy, as also do the measures taken to secure the regular observance of the Passover. The full discussion of this very difficult question is beyond the scope of this book. On the whole, it is likely that the discovered roll contained at least Deuteronomy iv 45–xxvi, and xxviii.

*Deut. xxviii 15 ff.

*Deut. xii 8–26.

*Deut. xvi 1–8.

Josiah thus continued the policy of centralizing the national religion which Joash had begun, and

definitely established the principle that there could be but the one sanctuary for the one God. The reform in favour of centralization was helped by the rise of an almost superstitious veneration for Jerusalem itself. The fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy and the miraculous deliverance from Sennacherib had raised the prophet's pronouncement that Jerusalem was inviolable to an axiom of political and religious faith; Jehovah had established His house in Jerusalem for ever, and for ever would He protect it. We shall find Jeremiah opposing this idea within a short time. But in any case, the destruction of the local sanctuaries was now a necessary step, if the purity of worship as offered to the one God was to be preserved. Israel had ever been prone to regard rites and ceremonies as of more importance than the moral truths which they symbolized, and to think that the due performance of outward worship was all that could be demanded of the worshipper. Moreover, the similarity of these rites to those employed by surrounding religions often tempted worshippers, especially in the country districts, to confuse or identify Jehovah with heathen gods. It was impossible to abolish ritual, but it was possible to regularize ritualistic forms by confining them to one place. The influx of country priests was not without its effect upon the religious life of the capital; the vigour of thought and independence of outlook which we associate with country-bred thinkers, such as Amos, Micah or Jeremiah, was doubtless represented among them. On the other hand, the

newcomers were not allowed the full privileges of priestly service; their local and domestic interests were gone, the highest posts in their profession were closed to them, and probably many were reduced to beggary.

The prophet Jeremiah occupies an even larger space in the history of Judah than his great predecessor Isaiah. At first sight, their respective positions appear very similar; both denounced the same vices and pointed to the same paths of righteousness; both supported reforming kings in the work of extirpating idolatry and centralizing the worship of Jehovah; both, again, had to fight against parties striving to conclude alliances with Egypt, to see Judah swept by armies of northern invaders, and to live through the horrors of a siege. But no less striking is the difference in their teaching, as it expresses their political and religious hopes. Isaiah had helped to carry out a religious reform with apparent success; Jeremiah saw the failure of reform, whether introduced by Hezekiah or Josiah. Isaiah fixed his faith upon the inviolability of Jerusalem, as the only possible refuge and centre for the Remnant; Jeremiah found that this faith had become superstition, that the saving watchword of the former generation was the deluding catchword of his own age; he saw no prospect but captivity, and put his faith, not upon the Remnant, but upon the Return. The reason for this change of outlook was political; it was not Assyria but Babylonia that menaced Jerusalem in Jeremiah's time. As the fate of Sa-

maria had proved, an Assyrian captivity meant national annihilation; a Babylonian captivity did not; it offered an environment of greater culture and a larger measure of religious toleration, while the religious vitality of the Jewish nation was now strong enough to resist the deadening influences of an exile in Mesopotamia. Jeremiah, with no less foresight than Isaiah had shown, was able to see this difference, and therefore to advise surrender to the Chaldeans and to regard the prospect of exile with hope for the future.

Jeremiah was born at Anathoth, a village some four miles from Jerusalem, probably about the same time as Josiah himself; he was a member of a family of priests, and this fact, together with his proximity to Jerusalem, explains his familiarity with the city and the Temple. His call to his ministry occurred in Josiah's thirteenth year, about 625 B.C. Both at home and abroad the times were ominous; his own people were idolatrous and immoral; while Assyria in that same year was shaken by the sudden irruption of a Scythian horde, which penetrated to the borders of Egypt. This movement was coincident with an invasion of Asia Minor by other Scythian and Cimmerian hordes, and it is interesting as the first historical instance of the numerous invasions of cultured Europe and Asia by the wild nomads of Mongolia, produced from time to time by some increase of population or failure of food supply which induced a tribe to abandon its home, and started a series of waves which eventually overflowed the frontiers of the

*Jer. i 1.

civilized west. Psametik I of Egypt is said to have induced the Scythians to retreat by costly presents; according to Herodotus they dominated Upper Asia for twenty-eight years. Judah, however, was spared any devastation, and the invaders seemed to have turned aside; but their impetuous onset made an impression on Jeremiah, and he refers to them more than once. Jeremiah nowhere makes direct mention of Josiah's reforms; but possibly the ill-treatment which he suffered from the people was due to the fact that he supported the movement for centralization against the claims of the local shrine.

Herod. i 105.

*E.g. Jer. iv 6, 29–31.

*Jer. xi 18–23.

Josiah lost his life in a conflict with Egypt. Psametik I had made himself master of Egypt with the help of foreign mercenaries, but domestic disturbances and the Scythian invasion had confined him to his own territory. His son, Necho, proposed to extend the Egyptian power over Syria, which Assyria, now tottering to its fall, was unable to defend. In the year 609 B.C. the Egyptians marched through Palestine upon an expedition of conquest towards the Euphrates. Josiah met the Egyptians at Megiddo, and was killed in the battle. As the conflict took place so far north, it is probable that the Egyptian force came by sea. Josiah doubtless acted with the hope of maintaining his independence; he was practically independent of Assyria, and had no wish to be under the control of Egypt. His death aroused universal grief; Jeremiah awards him high praise

*Jer. xxii 15, 16.

as a just and upright ruler, qualities which became the more striking when contrasted with the incompetency of his son.

CHAPTER VIII

The Captivity

The popular choice passed over Josiah's eldest son, and fell upon his fourth son, Shallum, who was renamed Jehoahaz. We do not know why the eldest son was not chosen; possibly the party in favour of a fight for independence found themselves obliged to reject the son whom Egypt was shortly to appoint as their sovereign. The unusual ceremony of anointing was probably performed for this reason. Necho of Egypt, however, had returned from his three months' raid to the Euphrates, and had already reached the Orontes at Riblah, whither he summoned the new king. Jehoahaz obeyed, perhaps with the hope of making terms, but was thrown into chains and sent to Egypt; his elder brother Eliakim was put on the throne, and Judah became tributary to Egypt. Necho changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim, perhaps as an affirmation that the change of rulers was due to the will of Jehovah. Of Jehoahaz we know nothing more, except that both Jeremiah and Ezekiel felt for the extent of his misfortune. Jehoiakim was a weak-minded

2 Kings xxiii 31–35.
2 Chron. xxxvi 1–4.

*Jer. xxii 11.
1 Chron. iii 15.

*Jer. xxii 10

*Ezek. xix 3–5

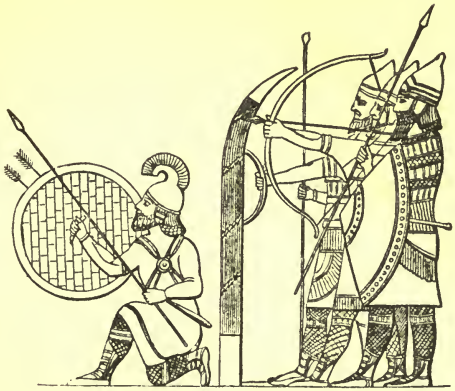
ruler, who was seized with the royal mania for building at a time when the very existence of his city was doubtful. He compelled his workmen to work without wages, and sold judicial decisions to gain money for his designs.

*Jer. xxii 14.

Egypt had been able to advance westward because, for the moment, there was no one to dispute her progress. But the hour of her downfall was at hand. Upon the death of the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, Babylon appears to have revolted; we find a Chaldean, Nabopolassar, on the throne, who strengthened himself against Assyria by an alliance with the Medes. This warlike race, who held the territory south of the Caspian Sea, appear to have made themselves independent of Assyria some seventy years before the fall of Nineveh. Ashurbanipal was succeeded by two kings, of whom little is known except that they did nothing to check the advance of Babylon in conjunction with the Medes. When Nabopolassar had completed his preparations, he advanced upon Nineveh with Cyaxares, the Median king. The city was captured and sacked in 607 or 606, and the Assyrian empire was at an end. The city was never rebuilt, and heaps of ruins and rubbish have preserved for our instruction the records which Ashurbanipal and other kings had collected in their libraries. The prophet Nahum gives a vivid description of the overthrow, while Zephaniah describes the ensuing desolation.

*Nahum iii.
Zeph. ii 14.

The Assyrian empire, like other Oriental constructions of the kind, was a mere congeries of



Assyrian Shields

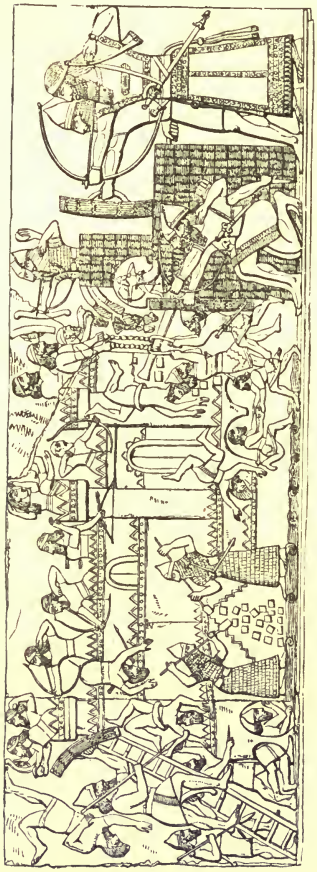
conquered states, and collapsed with great rapidity when once the central power had decayed. Before the time of Tiglath-Pileser III there was no

Assyrian Heavy-armed Infantry

Assyrian Archer in Cuirass

attempt to centralize the government of the outlying states or to supervise their doings. They were

obliged to pay their tribute, to furnish troops at need and to give free passage to the armies of their suzerain; the native administrations were allowed to continue, though the ruler might be summoned to the Assyrian court at any moment. But there were no other bonds of union, and the desperate measures of wholesale transportation were unavailing to check the tendency to disruption. The empire was a predatory state, existing to satisfy the wants of a large class of officials and based upon military power; there was no united population and little sense of nationalism, though much class pride. When the army and the officials were destroyed the empire disappeared, and there was



Assyrian Assault upon a City

On the right the besieged are attempting to lift the battering-ram out of place by means of a chain passed underneath it. Others are covering this operation with arrow-fire. Two besiegers are holding the ram down with hooks. From the central and left towers fire is being thrown upon the enemy. On the left a warrior is mounting a ladder holding a shield before him, while the brick walls are undermined below.

neither attempt nor desire to revive an institution which had merely impoverished or enslaved vast numbers of its subjects. The later Assyrian conquests were made with mercenary or foreign troops; the chariot was a formidable weapon; but the chief strength of the army was the heavy-armed infantry, who carried lances and short swords, and were protected by shields, armour, and helmets. The ordinary brick fortifications of Mesopotamian towns were easily battered down by the heavy Assyrian rams; against strong masonry or natural rock defences the Assyrians were less successful. Assyrian art reached a high level of excellence and was devoted to the glorification of the kings; but how far it was of Assyrian origin is hard to say, as the artists, like the army, may have been collected from far and wide. Assyrian potters and metal workers were certainly highly skilled, and the patterns on their work are often of remarkable excellence. The Assyrian knowledge of mathematics and astronomy was considerable; tables of square roots and geometrical progressions have been found, and chronology, as we have seen, was an exact science. These studies were confined to the priestly class.

Nabopolassar thus became the founder of the New Babylonian empire, which endured for about seventy years. The nationality which had sought the alliance of Hezekiah now became the enemy of Judah. Nabopolassar cemented the Median alliance by a marriage between his son, Nebuchadnezzar (or Nebuchadrezzar), and the daughter of

the Median Astyages. The two kings divided the Assyrian empire between them, Astyages naturally taking the territory north of the Tigris. Nabopolassar then sent his son against the Egyptians; a battle was fought at Carchemish, on the Euphrates, and the Egyptians were utterly defeated in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar advanced westward to the Egyptian frontier, and received the submission of all the Syrian states, including Judah. Towards the end of that year Nebuchadnezzar was informed of his father's death, and hastened back to Babylon to secure his throne. Jehoiakim, who owed his crown to Necho, then renewed his allegiance to Egypt. This policy was opposed by Jeremiah, who warned the people that Jehovah would lay the city waste as He had destroyed the old sanctuary of Shiloh. The people, infuriated by this seeming blasphemy, dragged the prophet before the princes, who referred to the case of Micah as a precedent for releasing him. Another prophet, Uriah, who supported Jeremiah, fled to Egypt for safety; but Jehoiakim was able to secure his extradition, and sent a party of men to fetch him under Elnathan, the son of Achbor, probably the father of his wife Nehushta; Uriah was put to death at Jerusalem. The incident throws some light both upon the closeness of the king's relations with Egypt and upon the bitterness of party spirit at Jerusalem.

2 Kings xxiii 36–xxiv 7.

2 Chron. xxxvi 5–8.

*Jer. xxvi 1–24.

The king's determination to cling to Egypt was invincible. Jeremiah recorded his prophecies in a

roll, written by Baruch the scribe, to show the consistency of his message during the last twenty years. The king heard of the reading of the book to the people, and after inspecting it, burnt it in anger, in spite of the remonstrances of some of his nobles (including Elnathan), but was unable to vent his wrath upon the prophet or the scribe. A new roll was then written, which was probably the nucleus of Jeremiah's prophecies as we have them.

*Jer. xiii 23.

Jer. xxxvi.

Jeremiah is often regarded as a weeping prophet; but this epithet, though given to him as the author of the book of Lamentations, gives a false impression of his real work. His usual attitude is that of the stern judge; he compares himself to a brazen wall and iron tower, and most remarkable is the rigid consistency with which he preached his message of failure, knowing that he would be contradicted, accused of treachery and exposed to violence. He pleads with Jehovah, and receives only a fresh call to duty, to proclaim that the time of captivity has come, that the confidence in the Temple as inviolable is false, and that the new ritual of the reformed sanctuary will not save the people. After the burning of his book, Jeremiah's attitude is one of calm despair; the people are taught by precept and act, that they may be without excuse, but not because the prophet hopes for their safety. An opportunity for an object lesson was afforded by the Rechabites, who had been prominent supporters of Jehu in past years. When the Chal-

*Jer. vii 1-7.

*Jer. xxxv.

dean invasion began they took refuge within the walls of Jerusalem. Jeremiah offered them wine in the sight of the people; they refused to drink, because their ancestor had bound them by a vow to continue Israel's ancient mode of life in the desert. Their loyalty was in strong contrast to the faithlessness of Judah: they had kept a merely human command; Judah would not keep a covenant with Jehovah.

The disturbance in Syria continued, and Nebuchadnezzar, from his headquarters at Riblah on the Orontes, sent out detachments of his army to crush the rebels. Judah was sorely harassed by these bands of marauders. Jehoiakim died before the Babylonian king could attack Jerusalem in person; whether he suffered the fate predicted by Jeremiah, we are not told. He was vain, weak-minded, shortsighted and self-indulgent, and exhibited most of the vices and none of the virtues of an Oriental despot. His son, Jehoiachin (Coniah), was recognized as king, but after a reign of three months, Nebuchadnezzar appeared before Jerusalem, and the city was surrendered unconditionally in 597 B.C. The city was spared, but Jehoiachin was carried to Babylon, where he remained in captivity until the accession of Evil-Merodach in 561 B.C. Among those who accompanied him was the prophet Ezekiel, who speaks of him as the young lion caged and taken to Babylon. Jeremiah, who remained in Jerusalem, also lamented the king's fate. Nebu-

2 Kings xxiv 8–xxv 21.
2 Chron. xxxvi 9–21.
*Jer. xxii 18, 19.

*Ezek. xix 3–9.
Jer. xxii 24–30.

chadnezzar also carried away the treasures of the palace and Temple, and the principal inhabitants, including all people of wealth and rank, the men-at-arms, and the chief artisans, with the object of removing all who might be able to plan a revolt, in which calculation he was mistaken. Jeremiah was probably concealed outside Jerusalem, in the refuge to which he had fled when escaping from Jehoiakim's anger. In any case, as he had fought against the policy of revolt, he would be left behind as a supporter of the Babylonian supremacy. His vision of the two baskets of figs is symbolical of the exiles, and of those who were left behind. The anguish and terrors of these months are probably reflected in the prophecies of Habakkuk. The prophet calls upon the Lord for an explanation of these wars. How can the pure eyes of Jehovah endure such sights? How can these miseries be reconciled with the divine government of the world? The prophet is told that "the just shall live by his faith", an intimation of that sense of personal religion of which the exiles were to learn the meaning in their captivity.

*Jer. xxiv 2.

*Hab. ii 4.

Mattaniah, the third son of Josiah, and Jehoiachin's uncle, was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to govern the people who were left behind. His name was changed to Zedekiah, "the righteousness of Jehovah", presumably by his own choice. He was a weak man, and was confronted by a difficult task. Those who were left in Jerusalem felt that the judgment had come and gone; they themselves had

been spared, and therefore they were probably more righteous than those who were carried away. The government must be reconstructed; vacant lands and houses were to be had, and there was the excitement of a rush for place and power. The "bad figs", as Jeremiah styled them, were full of their own importance—"they (the exiles) are far from Jehovah; to *us* is this land given in possession", was their cry. The step to an anti-Babylonian policy was a development only to be expected in the case of a government overwhelmed with the sense of its own importance, and an opportunity was soon afforded. The neighbours of Judah were ready to make a common effort to throw off the Babylonian yoke. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon sent representatives to Jerusalem to discuss measures of revolt; Egypt was ready to promise assistance. Jeremiah did his best to oppose the plan, and performed one of the symbolical actions characteristic of the prophets, to explain his views upon the right policy for Judah. He made a number of wooden yokes and wore one himself, while he bore the others to the ambassadors, as a sign that the nation should "put their necks into the yoke of the King of Babylon". Hananiah, a leader of the false prophets, broke Jeremiah's yoke in pieces, explaining that within two years Jehovah would enable them to throw off the yoke of Babylon. Jeremiah afterwards retorted that the yoke of wood would be replaced by one of iron, and that Hananiah himself would die within the

*Ezek. xi 15.

Jer. xxvii, xxviii.

year, which prophecy was fulfilled. Ezekiel, among the exiles, supported Jeremiah in urging the futility of resistance with equally small effect. Messages from Babylon urging revolt seem to have provoked Jeremiah to write his letter to the exiles, warning them against false hopes of an early return. It was probably at this juncture that Zedekiah was summoned to Babylon in person. Nebuchadnezzar had been informed of the proposed confederation, and wished to call his vassal to account. Zedekiah was able to soothe his suspicions, until 589 B.C., when the Babylonian monarch sent an army to Palestine and besieged Jerusalem. The slaves resident in the city were freed for the purpose of strengthening the defensive powers of the people, and in fulfilment of the Mosaic command, which said that the slave of native birth should be liberated after six years' service. A solemn sacrificial act was performed to ratify this tardy repentance towards Jehovah. Apparently it was rewarded. Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) marched upon Palestine, and the Babylonian army turned to confront this relieving force. This temporary respite was regarded by the inhabitants of Jerusalem as a final deliverance; it seemed that the events of 701 B.C. were to be repeated. Repentance was forgotten, and the liberated slaves were forced to resume their servitude. Against such a lack of honour and in the face of such fickleness no prophet could strive without despair.

Jer. xxix.

Jer. li. 59.
*Ezek. xvii 13.

*Deut. xv 12-18.

Jer. xxxiv 8-22.

At this moment, Jeremiah attempted to leave the city to go to his own village at Anathoth. Land had there been put up for sale, and Jeremiah had bought some property as a sign of his confidence in his own teaching. He was arrested as a traitor and lowered into a foul dungeon, whence he was only rescued at night by an Ethiopian slave with the king's consent. He was then kept in confinement till the end of the siege. Zedekiah sought his advice, and in the king's ear, or to anyone who would hear him, he continued to preach the policy of submission. Zedekiah was, however, entirely in the hands of his desperate nobles, who were resolved to hold out to the last. We do not know whether the Pharaoh fought a pitched battle or not. In any case, the Babylonian army speedily reappeared before Jerusalem, and the horrors of the siege began which are described in the book of Lamentations. The end soon came in the month of July, 587: the provisions were exhausted, a breach was made in the walls, and Zedekiah with a small body of soldiers attempted to escape by night in the direction of Jericho. In the Jordan valley they were captured, and brought before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. Zedekiah's sons were put to death before his eyes; he himself was blinded, and carried in chains to Babylon. Jerusalem was sacked, and the fortifications were dismantled.

Jer. xxxviii. xxxix.

The leaders of the people and the remnant left in the city were either killed or carried away to Babylon; a number of the poorest class were

allowed to remain in the country, which was made a Babylonian province; and one of their own countrymen, Gedaliah, was appointed governor of the land. His father, Ahikam, had saved Jeremiah's life in the persecution of Jehoiakim, and his grandfather, Shaphan, had been an important member of Josiah's court. He set up his government at Mizpah, where he was joined by Jeremiah, who had been liberated by the Babylonians, and was doubtless regarded by them as likely to support their administration of the country. Refugees from the surrounding districts began to return to Judah as soon as the news spread that the Babylonians had departed. Gedaliah urged them to submit peaceably to the Chaldean yoke, to cultivate their land and allow him to represent the foreign power at Mizpah. Jerusalem was in ruins, and no attempt was made to restore its buildings; indeed, any such proceeding would probably have aroused the suspicions of the Babylonian authorities. A party, however, rose in opposition to Gedaliah, under the leadership of Ishmael, a refugee who had returned from the land of Ammon; their action seems to have been instigated by the king of the Ammonites, who was possibly anxious to revive the confederacy against the Chaldeans; as a member of the seed royal, Ishmael could claim the throne. A conspiracy was formed against Gedaliah, who was warned by Johanan, another refugee, that his life was threatened. Gedaliah refused to listen, and fell a victim to his confidence. He and his ad-

2 Kings xxv 8-26.
Jer. xl-xliv.

herents were murdered by Ishmael, who then attempted to carry the daughters of Zedekiah into captivity in the land of Ammon. This endeavour was frustrated by Johanan, who gathered an armed force and intercepted Ishmael's retreat. The majority of his followers then joined Johanan, but Ishmael himself escaped. The whole body, in fear that the Babylonians might avenge the murder of Gedaliah upon themselves, resolved to take refuge in Egypt. Jeremiah made vain efforts to dissuade them, and eventually he and Baruch were forced to accompany them. The exiles settled at Tahpanhes,[1] and began the practice of idolatry, notwithstanding the warnings of the prophet. Here their history ends. Jeremiah is said to have been stoned by his fellow countrymen in exile. The prophetic career was usually a life of disappointment and often of personal danger; the prophet who did his duty constantly preached to deaf ears, and endured the bitter disappointment of beholding his country rushing blindly to its doom. Such grief Jeremiah had experienced to the full; his foresight was misinterpreted as blindness and his inspired utterances as blasphemy. When Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" some of them answered, "Jeremiah", and the choice need not surprise us; for Jeremiah was no less a stumbling-block and an enigma to his age than was the Son of Man to Pharisaism.

*Matt. xvi 14.

[1] The Greek Daphnae, the modern Tell Defneh, the frontier fortress of Egypt, on the caravan road to Pelusium. Petrie has shown that Psametik used it as a station for the Carian and Ionian mercenaries, with which he maintained his power.

CHAPTER IX

The Exile

With the murder of Gedaliah and the flight of Johanan to Egypt, the last vestige of native rule in Judah had disappeared. Many of the inhabitants had taken refuge among the surrounding tribes, Moab, Ammon, and Edom, while others were exiles in Babylonia. Edom, we learn from the prophet Obadiah, seized the opportunity to encroach upon the devastated territory of Judah. At the same time we are not to assume that the land was absolutely denuded of its original inhabitants: the district in modern times has supported nearly two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants; the most generous estimate of Nebuchadnezzar's deportations will amount to some seventy thousand, and the migrations to Egypt and elsewhere will not enable us to account for the remainder. Both Gedaliah and the inhabitants under him seem to have regarded a life of agriculture as likely to be tolerable or even prosperous, nor did the Babylonians send colonists to the country as the Assyrians had done in the case of Samaria. Hence there is every probability that a considerable number of Jews remained in Judah during the period of the exile. They were, as we are told, the lowest stratum of the population, for every man of any military or political capacity had been carried away; they were, no doubt, mere disorganized peasants, harassed by the surround-

*Jer. xli.

ing tribes, ready to accept their idolatry, and likely to be rather a hindrance than a help to the restorers of the nation, when these were able to return from their captivity.

The prophet of the exile is Ezekiel; the prophet of the return is the Second Isaiah (i.e. Is. xl and following chapters: see note, p. 289). From their writings, and from hints given elsewhere, we gather some vague picture of the nature of life during the exile. We have, in the first place, the fact that some forty-two thousand people, or perhaps heads of families, returned from exile, and left many others of their nationality behind them; the tribal and family system had been preserved; money was raised by subscription for the expenses of the return and of the restoration. So much alone will show that the exile was not a life of oppression and hardship in every case. The members of the upper classes who were first deported probably received honourable treatment: they were able to pursue their avocations or to rise to power and influence; Daniel is a case in point. Their lives were the usual lives of Jews in exile; some grew rich and wealthy, others were poor and oppressed. In three respects their activity is clear.

In the first place, much literature was produced during the exile. The Jews had before them the example of the native Babylonian scribes; the extraordinary care expended upon the records of Babylonian and Assyrian history must have stimulated their zeal to preserve the narratives of their own past, and from the native writers they learned

to respect chronological data. Ezekiel, when compared with the other prophets, is obviously a writer rather than a speaker, with leisure at his disposal and time to pay attention to literary elaboration. The historical books of the Old Testament were recompiled, parts of the law were codified, and prophecies were arranged. Nor was the contemplation of the past without its effect upon the religious temper of the exiles. They gained a general retrospect of the history of their national failure, and saw it as a history of the righteousness of God in opposition to national perversity, while the final catastrophe was proof that Jeremiah and Ezekiel had been genuinely inspired and were prophets worthy of credence. If they went into exile with every inclination to idolatry, they returned convinced worshippers of the one God. This monotheism they certainly did not learn either from Babylon or Persia. The admonitions of their prophets and the study of their own history will sufficiently account for the change. Their views of the world were also broadened and deepened; they saw other nations subject as they were themselves; they found that God could be worshipped, though the Temple, the city, the monarchy, and the material forms of life, had been swept away. They learned to know God as universal and almighty, and not as the local deity of a petty province. Man himself was God's temple, and all men but the instruments of His will. The old forms of ritual and sacrifice were now impossible: other practices replaced them. In the assem-

*Is. lviii 12-14.

blies for prayer and the reading of scripture we see the beginning of the future synagogue. Four annual fasts were observed, commemorating the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege, the day of the capture of Jerusalem, the day of its destruction, and the date of Gedaliah's murder.

A further result of these experiences was the rise of individualism or personal religion. Jeremiah and Habakkuk had realized that, in view of the national failure, the future of religion lay with the individual soul. The sudden change of environment was not without influence in this direction. The Jews had passed from a land of mountains to a land of plains, and were now settled in the neighbourhood of Babylon, upon plains which were one of the great commercial centres of the ancient world. The winds, the floods and the storms, the fertility of the district and the splendour of the sun's rising and setting, are probably reflected in the visions of Ezekiel. While the exiles were thus led to reflect upon the world about them, the instinct for worship, and the necessity of conceiving a new form of intercourse between man and God, drove them to reflect upon the nature of man. For communion with God, the altar, the priest and the Temple had been regarded as indispensable; the prayers of the individual had taken the form of vows to be performed at the altar. Experience now showed that the individual might pray and receive assurance in his heart that his prayer was answered. A retrospect of national

*Jer. xxxi 29, 30.

*Ps. lxv 1-2.

history brought the observer to a similar point of view, and led him to revise the prevailing theories upon sin, guilt, and suffering. Ezekiel, in predicting the final overthrow of Jerusalem, is obliged to consider the question, shall the righteous perish with the wicked? and is brought to the conclusion that the righteous shall be spared. Earlier generations had been scourged by Jehovah, not because their forefathers had sinned, but because they had themselves been guilty. A man or a generation might suffer *in consequence of* another's sins; but he could not be punished *for* them. Guilt was incommunicable and vicarious punishment was an immoral idea. The book of Kings, which was probably brought to its final form during the exile, criticizes the kings from this standpoint. The individual was responsible to God for himself and his own actions: "the soul that sinneth, it shall die". Hence the individual and his personal sacrifice were of real value in Jehovah's sight, and the way is cleared for the rise of the Messianic idea.

Ezek. xviii.

Both Judah and Israel had entered upon the path of commercial development under their later kings, but it was during the exile that the Jews first displayed that aptitude for business and affairs by which as exiles they have ever since been distinguished. Nebuchadnezzar strove to develop the commercial resources of his people, and many of the exiles readily responded to the example thus set before them. Jeremiah's advice in his letter to the captives was eventually adopted, and hints are given in Isaiah which in-

*Jer. xxix 4-7.

dicated that absorption in business became, in certain cases, a positive danger, and obscured the ideal of a return and a restored Jerusalem. The Jews who declined to share the dangers and hardships of the return, were prosperously settled in their new homes, and were unwilling to abandon their comforts at the call of a sentimental idea. In this sense the exile was a sifting of the nation. The faithful few, to whom the world owes an incalculable debt, and who continued to realize their responsibility, gathered round such teachers as Ezekiel, and disregarding the scorn of their worldly compatriots and the oppression of their conquerors, looked forward to the prospect of return in yearning for their native land. This prospect of return, and the events that would be connected with it, form the central point of Ezekiel's prophecies. Isaiah had proclaimed that a remnant should return. Prophets had continually striven to rouse the nation to a sense of their extraordinary privileges and responsibilities, as the repository of the oracles of God. Now that the destruction of Jerusalem, so long foretold, had come to pass, prophets obtained a readier hearing than before.

*Is. lv 2; lxv 11.

*Ps. cxxxvii.

Ezekiel, who prophesied until 571 B.C., was to the exiles, in some degree, what Moses had been to the Israelites in the wilderness. Like Jeremiah, he came of a priestly family, and like other prophets, he received a direct call from Jehovah—the vision of the seraphim attending upon their Lord in His chariot. The chariot emphasized the fact that Je-

hovah was in no way bound to Jerusalem; and Ezekiel's early prophecies are concerned with predictions of the final overthrow of Jerusalem, and with the description of the various symbolical acts by which he guaranteed his prophecies. He explains the reason for the exile, and points the moral to be learned from the past. The second part of the book deals with the future. The vision of the valley of dry bones is a picture of the restoration as showing the omnipotence of God. Elaborate pictures are drawn of the Temple as it was to be, and of the ritual to be performed in it. Their priests their selection and their mode of life are the subject of detailed regulations. In all these discussions two points stand out clearly. In the first place, Ezekiel looked forward to a national return upon a large scale, with a people gathered round a temple and expressing their devotion to Jehovah by fixed rites. In the second place, the primary purpose of this restoration was to reveal the power of Jehovah. It was not entirely Ezekiel's opinion that the return would be an answer to prayer and contrition, and a favour granted to a repentant people. The return was rather the method by which Jehovah chose to continue the honour due to His holy name. The restoration was to come that the world might learn who Jehovah was, and the repentance of Israel would be rather the effect than the cause of the restoration. Hence the importance which Ezekiel attached to ritual. The nation

*Ezek. xxxvii.

*Ezek. xxxvi 21.

*Ezek. xx 39–44.

which had been restored to magnify the name of Jehovah, must render a magnificent service worthy of that name. At the same time, Ezekiel was by no means a mere formalist, and to call him the father of Pharisaism is to misrepresent his moral influence.

In order to explain the full significance of the return from the captivity, some account must be given of the political events which led up to it. After the capture of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar attacked Tyre, and besieged it for thirteen years before the city acknowledged defeat. Ezekiel refers to these operations, and states that by the labour of carrying siege materials "every head was bald and every shoulder peeled". In 572 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar also invaded Egypt, defeated Pharaoh Hophra, and penetrated to the borders of Ethiopia. He devoted much attention to rebuilding and beautifying Babylon. Concerning his relations with Daniel, no information has been discovered from the inscriptions. The book of Daniel was written long after the return from the exile, but Daniel's reputation among the exiles is evidenced by Ezekiel's reference to him. Nebuchadnezzar died in 561 B.C., after a successful reign, and was succeeded by Evil-Merodach, who showed kindness to Jehoiachin. Little is recorded of his reign. He was murdered in 559 by Neriglissar, his brother-in-law, who seized the throne, and is possibly the Nergal-Sharezar mentioned by Jeremiah as one of the Babylonian princes present

*Ezek. xxix 18.

Dan. i–iv.

*Ezek. xiv 14.

*2 Kings xxv 27.

at the capture of Jerusalem. He died after a reign of four years. His successor was murdered by by palace conspirators, who placed Nabonidus on the throne in 554. *Jer. xxxix 3, 13. Nabonidus was a scholar of archæological tastes. He devoted much energy to the restoration of temples, and also to the excavation of their foundations in search of the records of the early kings. As he refers to these discoveries in his own inscriptions, his work upon the history of his country has proved valuable to modern Assyriologists. His researches made him very unpopular with the Babylonian priests, who asserted that he neglected the customary religious ceremonies and alienated the favour of the gods, or drove them out of the country. Probably his son Belshazzar, with whom he was on excellent terms, was the real ruler of the country. Nabonidus was the Labynetus whom Herodotus states was overcome by Cyrus. Herodotus also attributes many architectural works of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to Nitocris, whom he calls the mother of Labynetus. Nitocris thus seems to have been one of Nebuchadnezzar's wives, and for this reason Nabonidus was able to claim the throne and the book of Daniel refers to Belshazzar as the descendant of Nebuchadnezzar. Herod. i 185-188.

We have already referred to the rise of the Median empire under Cyaxares. After the sack of Nineveh, in 606, the Medes retired to their own country, which extended from the river Halys to the Indus. with Ecbatana as its capital. In

the west, the Lydian empire had grown powerful under Alyattes and Crœsus upon the shores of the Ægean Sea. Medians, Lydians, and Babylonians were alike to fall before Cyrus, an Achæmenid of Persia, though independent of the Persians, and ruling his own kingdom on the rivers Choaspes and Eulœus, between the head of the Persian Gulf and Mount Zagros, Susa being his capital town. His first advance was made at the expense of Media. It is difficult to find any substratum of historical truth in the legend by which Herodotus accounts for the struggle between Astyages of Media and Cyrus. The revolution in this case was rather domestic than international. The Aryan Medes joined the Aryan Persians under Cyrus in opposition to the Semites, and by 546 B.C. Cyrus was master of the country from the Halys to the Indus. A contest with Babylon was inevitable. Nebuchadnezzar had strengthened Babylon, by building the famous Median wall across the space between the Tigris and Euphrates above Babylon, and had also constructed a great reservoir at Sippara, to flood the Babylonian canals in time of need. Cyrus advanced to this wall in 545 B.C., and was opposed by Belshazzar. He did not attempt to attack, as his attention was immediately diverted to the kingdom of Lydia. Crœsus, the King of Lydia, was the brother-in-law of Astyages of Media, and was therefore ready to oppose Cyrus. The struggle ended in his overthrow. Sardis, his capital town, was captured in 544, and Cyrus was occupied in Lydia and Ionia until

540 B.C. Isaiah refers to the excitement aroused in the west by the appearance of this new conqueror. In 539, he began his second campaign against Babylon, avoiding the Median wall, and entering the country from the north-east. Babylon was divided against itself; one party wished to resist Cyrus, and the other was discontented with the reputed unorthodoxy of Nabonidus. Their struggles destroyed all possibility of resisting Cyrus, who made himself master of Babylon with no great difficulty. Thus, throughout Asia the Semitic powers had disappeared, and Aryans were supreme.

*Is. xli 5, 7.

The Old Testament literature refers to this period in the description of Babylon's last night in the book of Daniel, and of the trials of Daniel under Darius the Mede, who is not to be confused with Darius the Great. The great literary and religious event of the time is the latter half of Isaiah, from the fortieth chapter onwards, which portion of the book is usually known as "Second Isaiah" (see additional note). The book begins at the time when Cyrus was conquering Media, and the author's theme is twofold. He deals with the possibility and the occasion of a return, and with the duty and destiny of the nation when the return has been accomplished. The book opens with the announcement that there is hope of deliverance; the past sins of the nation have been pardoned; their return will be facilitated by coming political changes; they are disorganized and without leaders, but they may trust in Jehovah, who will rule over them after

*Dan. v, vi.

*Is. xl 1-12.

their return. Then follows an appeal to the evidence of history, which, like Isaiah's first chapter, is cast in the form of an assize, with the idols as defendants. What is the meaning of this new conqueror? What will be the importance of Cyrus to the world's history? The idols cannot interpret these events—Jehovah alone can understand them, for they are His doing, and are part of His universal purpose. Cyrus is to be the universal conqueror, and Babylon is doomed.

*Is. xli.

*Is. xlv 1-6; xlvii.

Cyrus is thus regarded as the future liberator of the Hebrews from their captivity. Conjectures have been advanced that the Jews helped him to the conquest of Babylon, but such theories find no countenance in these prophecies. Cyrus was the great figure and mark of his age, and there is no more remarkable contrast than the views which the Greek and Hebrew nations have respectively held concerning him. Xenophon's *Cyropædia* may contain little historical truth, but it gives us an idealized picture of Cyrus as the Greeks conceived him. He there appears as an attractive hero, and as an example for young men to imitate. The Hebrew prophet, on the other hand, does not attribute to him any moral virtue as his own. He is Jehovah's Messiah, or shepherd, or instrument. The Greek regards Cyrus as the favourite of fortune; the prophet represents him as a tool in the hand of Jehovah, who will enable the people to realize the call to go forth.

*Is. xliv 28-xlv 13; xlvi 11; xlviii 14, 15.

*Is. xlviii 20.

The restoration of the people was, however, a spiritual and religious as well as a political problem. Their destiny and their duty upon their return form a large part of the prophet's theme. This destiny and duty may be summed up in the one word, service. The whole people are to be the servants of the one God. The question is sometimes asked, why the Hebrew nation alone should have been chosen as the peculiar objects of God's care; and doubtless the great nations of the East, or even Cyrus himself, would have received a statement of this fact at least with incredulity. The idea that the rise and fall of nations, and the conquests of Cyrus, were intended merely to purify and to liberate a petty nationality, would have been incomprehensible. The answer is, that Israel was chosen for service, as a means to an end, the preservation and the transmission to other nations of the oracles of God. As Greece gave the world philosophy, and as Rome gave it law, so Israel was to give it religion. The conditions of life in the ancient world made the selection of a nation for this purpose imperative. Individuals or a confraternity would have perished before they had been able to send abroad their message. In ages when communication was difficult, literature scarce, and the multiplication of it very slow, it was not easy for ideas to pass from mind to mind. Thus, in service, the Hebrews were to find salvation; *servus servatur*, and their past history had educated and specialized them for this purpose.

*Is. xliii 10.

If the nature of the service is plain, the character of the servant is not immediately clear to Second Isaiah. At first, the whole nation are regarded as servants; but when they are regarded as facing the practical necessities of their situation, the "servant" appears as a body less in number than the nation in general; there is a loyal kernel, which is to raise the nation to its own level; the process of sifting and of personification is carried further, until the prophecy reaches its height in the famous fifty-second and fifty-third chapters, and one man appears as serving and suffering on behalf of the people. Here we may note that development of the idea of suffering to which reference has been made in the case of Ezekiel; in the Second Isaiah the servant suffers *for* the sins of the people: "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all"; in First Isaiah the champion to be born suffers *from* the sins of the people, and finds his kingdom desolate in consequence of their misdeeds.

*Is. xli 8.

*Is. xlix 1-9.

*Is. ix 1-9.

The prophecy here becomes "Messianic". By this is implied the prospect that some special royal personage would appear, in whose days righteousness would be supreme and peace universal because of the empire of Jehovah. Such prophecies were uttered in the first instance with reference to the needs of a particular age; nor can we attempt to say how far the prophet was conscious that his words contained a deeper meaning, and a message for other generations than his own. Psalms ii,

xlv, and lxxii, for instance, while Messianic in meaning, were no less undoubtedly political in their first intention. The first definite pronouncement of the kind is Isaiah's prophecy concerning Immanuel. The Davidic birth of the regenerator is also asserted by Micah. These hopes, which were reiterated by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, were developed, as we have seen, from the doctrine that a remnant would return from the captivity, in which case they must have a centre round which to gather, the inviolable Mount Zion of Isaiah, and a leader to guide them. The return from exile was the prelude to an attempt to found an ideal commonwealth which should realize these conditions, and it was believed that the one requisite necessary to secure this realization was the complete and persistent observance of the law, which would ensure the coming of Jehovah's spirit upon the newly constituted nation. The germs of later Pharisaism are to found in this belief.

*Is. vii 10-17.

*Mic. v 2-5.

*Jer. xxxi 31 ff.

*Is. lx 1-22.

Additional Note, Second Isaiah.—It is now generally admitted that chapters xl–lxvi of the book known as Isaiah form a separate collection of prophecies, and are not to be attributed to the prophet himself. These chapters are usually quoted as "Second Isaiah". The reasons for making this division are as follows. In the first place, Second Isaiah deals with a series of events which took place more than a century after Isaiah's death. It is certainly conceivable that the prophet foresaw these events, but if the case be so, it is unexampled in the history of prophecy. Moreover, the state of affairs in Second Isaiah presupposes a number of important events to which the prophet makes no reference whatever, e.g. the defeat of Assyria

by the Babylonians, and the fall of Jerusalem; if the book is the work of one author, the absence of any reference to these events is hardly explicable. Again, if Isaiah is the author of the last half of the book which bears his name, these prophecies would have been known to Jeremiah and Ezekiel; in this case they also make no reference to what they would have known. Special incidents also are difficult to explain, on the theory that the book is a unity; when Jeremiah was impeached for prophesying the fall of Jerusalem, his defenders appealed to the precedent of Micah (Jer. xxvi); if the latter part of Isaiah had been in existence, there would have been less surprise on the part of Jeremiah's hearers, and a far more obvious precedent to which the appeal might have been made. For these and other reasons, the book is no longer regarded as a unity.

CHAPTER X

The Return

Cyrus became master of Babylon in 539 B.C., and in the first year of his reign a body of the exiles were enabled to return to Jerusalem. Cyrus, either as a matter of expediency or conviction, pursued a policy of religious toleration; the gods of other countries which he found in Babylon were restored to their homes, and with them went their worshippers. The policy of deportation which Tiglath-Pileser had initiated was successful when the conquered peoples could be absorbed by the conquerors; but it was obviously dangerous to allow a disaffected nation to live in the very proximity of the capital. Cyrus, therefore, had everything to gain by reversing the former Assyrian

policy; he would secure the gratitude and affection of the Jews; he would protect the south-western corner of his empire from Egyptian invasion, and he would have a secure base of operations for the invasion of Egypt, should he be able to conduct a campaign in that direction. For these reasons both Cyrus and Darius were ready to favour the Jews, and the organization of the latter ruler largely enabled the Jews to re-establish their nationality in its former home. The system of satrapies which Darius introduced, and which included the Jews in the satrapy of Syria, prevented any gross oppression, as other civil and military officials existed side by side with the satrap and independently of him. Nor was it likely that any undue burden of taxation would be immediately laid upon a new and struggling community.

Ezra i, iii.
*Ps. cxxvi.

The Psalmist expresses the delight of the exiles at this reversal of their fortunes. Under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, who is probably identical with Zerubbabel, forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty took advantage of the edict of Cyrus, and returned to Jerusalem. If this number, as is possible, refers only to the heads of families, some two hundred thousand left Babylon, accompanied by a considerable number of priests, including Jeshua, who was associated with Zerubbabel; the great majority of the Levites preferred to remain in exile, for reasons unknown to us. The returning body carried with them their sacred vessels—they alone of the subject captives of Babylon had no idols to bring—and also con-

siderable contributions from their compatriots who remained behind and who kept in touch with them during the following years. When the exiles reached their ruined homes, upon the first day of September, 537 B.C., they rebuilt the altar of burnt offerings, and began to collect materials for rebuilding the Temple. When, however, they had laid the foundations amid the tears of those "who had seen the first house", and the general jubilation of the younger generation, the work came to a standstill. Opposition arose from two quarters: the people of the land feared that their titles to possession might be disturbed, and "weakened the hands" of the builders; the foreign tribes who had been settled in Samaria by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal (Asnapper), and had mingled their idolatry with Jehovah worship, claimed a share in the work of restoration, on the ground that they, as inhabitants and worshippers of Jehovah, were under the protection of the national god. Their request was refused, and the long feud between the Jews and the Samaritans began. The Jews naturally persisted in the exclusiveness which had hitherto preserved their nationality from absorption by other nations, and which alone could preserve the purity of their religion. The opposition of the Samaritans continued for many years. Cyrus died in 529 B.C., and his successor, Cambyses, may not have felt the same interest in the Jews; the Samaritan emissaries were attempting to destroy Jewish credit at the Persian court, and the spirits of the newcomers were depressed by the struggle

Ezra iv.

C 309—(19)

SEAL OF DARIUS

Showing the king in his chariot hunting lions. Above him is the emblem of Ahuramazda.

for existence in a new environment and by bad seasons. The Temple was naturally neglected, and the builders began to argue that the time for the restoration of the house had not yet come. *Hag. i 2.

On the death of Cambyses in 522 B.C. a period of confusion and civil war disturbed the Persian empire, until Darius seized the throne in 521 B.C. The satrapy of Syria was not exempt from these disturbances, and the Jews were doubtless exposed to the inroads of Arab tribes and to the hostility of Samaritans and possibly of Phœnicians, without much prospect of redress. The picture of the land drawn by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah is no gloomier than we should expect to find. But in the second year of Darius the two prophets stirred up the people to energy, and Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest readily responded to their call. Haggai urged them to use the materials for building which Judah could herself provide, and not to wait for cedar from Phœnicia; "be strong" is the burden of his message. Zechariah, in a series of eight visions, showed how the city and Temple could rise to greatness from "the day of small things", and drew an ideal picture of life in the future Jerusalem. The work was recommenced, but the satrap of Syria, Tatnai, attempted to interfere. The northern side of the Temple formed part of the wall, and at a time when the empire of Darius was shaken by revolts the activity of the Jews seemed

*Zech. viii 10.

*Hag. i 8.

*Zech. viii 4, 5.

Ezra vi.

naturally suspicious to the satrap. The Jews appealed to the decree of Cyrus, and when Darius had verified their statements, he re-enacted the decree and made offers of help. In four and a half years the Temple was finished (516 B.C.), and a solemn festival celebrated the dedication of it.

The next half century is a period of darkness, and the prophet Malachi is the only certain voice which speaks to us. Zerubbabel disappears, how or why we do not know. We may conjecture a revival of the old struggle between the priestly and secular power for supremacy; the fact remains that the last prince of the house of David who exerted any authority in Jerusalem was gone. Malachi draws a very gloomy picture of the state of affairs in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood. Zerubbabel's place had been taken by a Persian governor, who probably felt no "interest" in religious affairs; the priests neglected their duties, and the people grew careless of worship and sacrifice. They divorced their wives in order to marry heathen women; there was a general lowering of religious standards, and a general belief that right conduct mattered nothing. But a small band of religious adherents was left, and for them Malachi had words of hope: "the refiner's fire" was at hand; "the sun of righteousness would rise with healing in his wings". Elijah would return before the "great and terrible day of the Lord" to turn the people to repentance.

*Mal. i 8.

*Mal. ii 10–16.

During the latter years of this period—485–458

B.C.—the Persian throne had been occupied by Xerxes, and history is full of the struggle between Persia and Greece. The book of Esther provides an interesting and instructive picture of the Jews and their position at the Persian court. The name Ahasuerus is the Hebrew form of the Persian name which the Greeks knew as Xerxes; and the vanity, the caprice and the cowardice of this monarch, as he appears in the book of Esther, entirely agree with what we learn of Xerxes from other sources. The story is concerned with the plot of Haman to destroy the Jews throughout the Persian empire with the object of overthrowing Mordecai, and tells of the means by which Esther was able to defeat the plot owing to her influence over the king. The Jewish feast of Purim (lots) commemorated the triumph of the Jews, and was celebrated annually upon the days when Haman cast the lot or Pur to destroy the Jews. The interval between the deposition of Vashti and the elevation of Esther amounted to six years, and is explained by the fact that Xerxes was absent upon his disastrous Greek campaign during that period. Esther's Jewish name was Hadassah, "myrtle"; Esther is the Assyrian Ishtar, or Ashtoreth, or Astarte, the goddess who symbolized youth and beauty, like the classical Venus. The name was perhaps given her as a nickname by her heathen friends in consequence of her beauty. Her guardian's name, Mordecai, is also heathen, and means "belonging to Merodach", the Baby-

Esther.

*Esther ii 16.

*Esther ii 7.

lonian god. Jews living in exile doubtless often adopted foreign names; even as, under the Roman empire, they found it useful to have Romanized forms of their names. Haman believed the current Babylonian superstitions concerning lucky and unlucky days, and cast lots for a period of twelve months in order to discover the best day for his plan of extermination. That the Jews were allowed to make the feast of Purim an occasion of public rejoicing while they lived among the Persians, whose compatriots they had slain, may appear strange; but the Persian annual commemoration of the murder of the pseudo-Smerdis by Darius will provide a parallel instance.

As long as Xerxes remained upon the throne the Babylonian Jews were unable to support the new and decaying community which had settled at Jerusalem; their Samaritan traducers were apparently able to frustrate any attempts in this direction. But in 465 B.C. Xerxes was murdered, and his son Artaxerxes Longimanus came to the throne. The Jews thereupon renewed their efforts at the Persian court, and Ezra, the priest and scribe, received permission from Artaxerxes to conduct a body of Jews to Jerusalem. The king himself sent presents to the Temple, and issued orders to his officials to facilitate Ezra's designs by every means in their power. He appointed Ezra governor of Judah, with power to nominate all subordinate officials in Palestine. Ezra set out in 458 B.C., and reached Jerusalem in four months. The mixed marriages had so

Ezra vii–x.

contaminated the population, priests and people alike, with foreign elements, that Ezra was horrified, and felt that the purification of the city must be his first task. A general assembly of the Jews was gathered at Jerusalem, amid the heavy rains of the November season, and a commission was appointed, before which all who had married foreign women were to appear. The process of investigation lasted two months, and at this point a blank of twelve or thirteen years again appears in the history of the Jews. The veil is not lifted until 445 B.C., in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes.

When the book of Nehemiah opens we find that Ezra has ceased to be governor, that priests and people have gone back to their foreign wives, and that the foreign neighbours and enemies of Judah are all-powerful. This state of affairs was doubtless brought about by political events. Artaxerxes had been occupied with a revolt in Egypt which the Athenians had supported, and the satrap of Syria had seized the opportunity to make himself practically independent. Ezra had thus been deprived of the support which the Persian court had originally offered, and the Samaritans had been able to resume their attitude of antagonism. Nehemiah had received an account of the sad state of affairs at Jerusalem from his brother, and when he was acting as the king's cupbearer his obvious distress attracted the attention of Artaxerxes. Upon explaining the reason of his sorrow, he received permission to revisit Jerusalem and to

Neh. i–iv.

rebuild its walls; he was appointed governor of Judea, and every help was given to facilitate his journey. Upon reaching Jerusalem he found himself confronted by foreigners who had grown powerful in the city, especially Sanballat of Samaria, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab. After making a secret survey of the walls, he assembled his countrymen and explained the king's decree. The Jews were induced to begin the work at once, and the building was completed in fifty-two days in spite of the opposition of the Samaritans. Sanballat prepared to attack the builders, but was intimidated by the guard they kept; he attempted to entice Nehemiah outside the city in order to assassinate him, and strove to stir up disaffection among the people, but all in vain.

When the walls were completed, social and religious affairs claimed Nehemiah's attention. The poorer classes had been obliged to mortgage their holdings of land, and even to sell their children into slavery to the richer Jews, as recent seasons of dearth had deprived them of their livelihood, while Persian taxation had also proved oppressive. Nehemiah persuaded the priests and nobles to agree to a general restoration of property: possibly this measure initiated the law of the Year of Jubilee, by which land reverted to its original owners every fifty years. Nehemiah, in any case, set the example by remitting the dues which were his right as governor, and by entertaining largely at his own table. When the walls had been completed and arrangements

Neh. v–vii.

made for guarding them, the Jews were called together from the various towns and villages, and assembled in Jerusalem on the 1st of September, the Feast of Trumpets. Ezra now reappeared, and standing by Nehemiah upon a wooden pulpit, read the "book of the law of Moses" to the multitude. On the second day the people heard the injunction to keep the Feast of the Tabernacles, which apparently even Ezra had forgotten, and celebrated it forthwith. The law was read and expounded daily during the feast, which was followed by a solemn fast, when the people confessed their sins and entered into a new covenant, promising solemnly to obey the law as their guide, to abstain from foreign marriages, to observe the Sabbath, and to pay the Temple tax and offerings. A census was then taken of the people, the new walls were consecrated, and it seemed that the new life had fairly begun.

Neh. viii.

Nehemiah was recalled to Susa by Artaxerxes in 433, but was able to return to Jerusalem in no long time. He found that the Jews had relapsed into their old habits during his absence; the high priest Eliashib had set the example, allowing his grandson to marry Sanballat's daughter, and allying himself to Tobiah the Ammonite, whom he had even permitted to occupy one of the chambers in the Temple. We note that Eliashib's name does not appear among the list of those who sealed the covenant upon the occasion of the solemn fast. Nehemiah at once adopted

Neh. xiii.

vigorous measures: he turned Tobiah unceremoniously out of the Temple; he reorganized the payment of the Temple tithes, which had been withheld; he stopped the desecration of the Sabbath, and excluded the Tyrian merchants during that day from the city. He then attacked the question of mixed marriages, which had gone so far that children were speaking a mixture of Jewish and other tongues. By persuasion and force he induced the people to declare that they would no longer take foreign wives or give their daughters to foreign husbands. The grandson of the high priest was banished from Jerusalem. With this cleansing of the city Nehemiah's work and his book comes to an end.

Throughout his term of office he had been a vigorous and upright ruler. Even Zerubbabel and Ezra had exacted their dues from the people as governors. Nehemiah had done nothing of the kind. He had daily entertained a large number of guests at his table, and had borne part of the cost of reconstructing the wall. Neither he nor his servants attempted to buy land at low rates during the period of poverty; on the contrary, he strove to check the abuses which this system of purchase had caused. To pursue the history of the Jews beyond this point is not our present purpose. The restoration which was effected by Ezra and Nehemiah was based upon the law, the Levitical code, which had been drawn up and completed during the years of exile. The hope before the nation was the advent of the Messiah

whom the prophets had foretold, an event interpreted in different ways by different minds. The means by which this hope was to be realized was the keeping of the law in its entirety. Such efforts produced eventually the fanatical formalism or the deliberate hypocrisy of the Pharisee. Ceremonies became important while their meaning was forgotten, Levitical purity was placed above morality, the nature of the offering and not the spirit of the giver was the mark of religious character. There was a return to the mechanical idea of religion which Isaiah and Amos had condemned. At the same time the law was "the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ": it could not always raise men to the longing for forgiveness and for personal communion with God; but it was an adequate basis upon which to found a national religion, and it provided a bond of unity which held the nation together through many struggles and vicissitudes, until the fullness of time was come.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Date *circ.*	Judah.	Israel.	The Prophets.	Syria.	Egypt.	Assyria.
B.C.		*House of Jeroboam.*				
932	Rehoboam.	Jeroboam.	Ahijah. Shemaiah.	Rezon.		
916	Abijah.				Shishak.	
914	Asa: alliance with Syria.	Nadab: house of Jeroboam extinct.				
		Baasha.		Benhadad I.		
		Elah.				
		Zimri.				
		House of Omri.				
		Omri: builds Samaria.				
874	Jehoshaphat.	Ahab: alliance with Phœnicia; Jezebel.	Elijah.			
	Judah and Israel allied against Syria.					
		Moabite revolt.				
		Siege of Samaria. Defeat of Israel and Syria at Karkar by Assyrians.				Karkar, 854 B.C.
		Battle of Aphek.				
	Battle of Ramoth Gilead.		Micaiah.	Benhadad II.		
		Ahaziah.				
850	Joram, married Athaliah, daughter of Ahab.	Joram.				
843	Ahaziah.					
843	Athaliah.	*House of Jehu.*				Jehu pays tribute to Shalmaneser II, 842 B.C.
837	Joash.	Jehoahaz.	Elisha.	Hazael.		
798	Amaziah: defeats Edom.	Joash: defeats Syria.		Benhadad III.		
	War between Israel and Judah, battle of Bethshemesh.					
790	Uzziah—	Jeroboam II conquers Moab, Gilead, and Syria.	Amos.			
749	Jotham regent.					
739	Jotham.	Zechariah: house of Jeroboam extinct.	Hosea.			Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul), 745. Menahem pays tribute, 738.
		Shallum.				
		Menahem.				
		Pekahiah.				
735	Ahaz. Syro-Ephraimitish war.	Pekah: alliance with Syria against Judah.	Isaiah.	Rezin.		
	Tribute to Assyria.	Assyria conquers Gilead.		Damascus captured by Assyria.		

Date *circ.*	Judah.	Israel.	The Prophets.	Syria.	Egypt.	Assyria.
B.C. 732		Hoshea: alliance with Egypt.			So. (Sewe).	Shalmaneser IV, 727.
722		Fall of Samaria: captivity in Assyria.				Sargon, 722.
720	Hezekiah— Illness. Embassy of Merodach-Baladan. Assyrian invasion: deliverance of Judah.		Micah.		Egypt defeated at Raphia, 720. Tir-hakah.	Sennacherib, 705.
692	Manasseh— Tributary to Assyria.					Esarhaddon, 681.
638	Amon.					Assurbanipal, 668.
637	Josiah— War with Egypt: battle of Megiddo. Judah vassal of Egypt.		Zephaniah. Nahum.		Necho.	Babylon independent. *Fall of Nineveh*, 606.
607	Jehoahaz.					*Babylon*
607	Jehoiakim— Judah vassal of Babylon.		Jeremiah.		Defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish, 605.	
597	Jehoiachin. First captivity.				Hophra.	
597	Zedekiah intrigues with Egypt Second captivity, 586.		Ezekiel. Second Isaiah.			Evil-Merodach, 561. Nergal-Sharezer, 559. Nabonidus, 555. *Persia.* Cyrus, 538, captures Babylon.
536	Return of Jews under Zerubbabel and Jeshua.			*Persian Empire*		
520	Rebuilding of Temple.		Haggai.	Cambyses conquers Egypt, 525.		
516	Dedication of Temple.		Zechariah.	Darius, 521. Marathon, 490.		
			Malachi.	Xerxes, 485. Salamis and Platæa, 480.		
458	Ezra at Jerusalem.			Artaxerxes I, 465.		
455	First visit of Nehemiah. Rebuilding of walls.					
432	Second visit of Nehemiah.					

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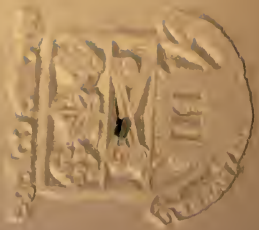

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